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# THE PATH OF THE JUST:

OR,

## THE CHRISTIAN'S PILGRIMAGE TO GLORY.

BY

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“ Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,  
And love with fear the only God, to walk  
As in His presence, ever to observe  
His providence, and on Him sole depend,  
Merciful over all His works, with good  
Still overcoming evil ; and by small  
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak  
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise  
By simply meek ; that suffering for truth's sake  
Is fortitude to highest victory,  
And to the faithful death the gate of life ;  
Taught this by His example, whom I now  
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever bless'd.”

MILTON.





## P R E F A C E.

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THE following chapters (with the exception of the introductory one, which was written afterwards) were first given to the public in the form of sermons delivered in a little School-church, or Chapel - of - ease, in the Parish of Marmullane, county Cork. As I have reason to believe that they were (some of them, at least) blessed by God to the refreshment, and, as I hope, the building up, of some of His servants at that place, I have ventured, hoping that it may please the Master further to use them in His blessed service, to make them into a little book. And I pray earnestly, as I send it forth, that He will widely bless it to the praise and glory of His dear name, the spread of His kingdom, and the strengthening of the spiritual life in His people ; their more com-

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plete self-consecration to His service, their growth in grace, and their increase in every good word and work.

R. W. GOSSE.

BELLE VUE, WEST HILL,  
HASTINGS, *Feb.* 1880.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

“ But hush ! ye sad repinings cease !  
Her life was blest ; her death was peace !  
And now her joys will still increase  
Through endless years.”

C. ELLIOTT.

“ The path of the just is as the shining light, that  
shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—PROV.  
iv. 18.

IN the following pages I propose to consider the character and the end of the life of the earnest, faithful Christian. It is a beautiful, cheering, and encouraging subject for contemplation, and the view we shall take of a holy life will not be, perhaps, according to the ideas generally entertained respecting it, but, as I hope and trust, far more correct and attractive. Godliness is no dismal, repulsive thing.

It is not a system of long faces and dry speeches. It is not characterised by weary hours and irksome duties. Compulsory silence, vows hard to be kept, rigid discipline, peculiarity of dress, and such like things, insisted upon by some and admired by others, are no part of it. It does not create dulness of spirit, solemnity of aspect, and gravity of speech. On the contrary, its prevailing feature is brightness, and it is the only thing that can make a life habitually and lastingly so. It, however, can and does, and it is important that we should impress this fact upon all—both those who are Christians, and those whom we wish to win to Christianity.

The verse I have quoted suggests this subject, and in the passage from which it is taken, the sacred writer is contrasting the life of the righteous man with that of the wicked. "The path of the just," he says, "is as the shining light," while "the way of the wicked is as darkness." The verses immediately preceding this assertion show what are the evil habits of the wicked man, and those that follow tell what must be done by him who

would walk in the paths of righteousness, to his happiness here and his reward hereafter. The wicked are full of malice. They are revengeful, and bent upon mischief. To carry out their selfish plans and aims they scruple not to injure others, and because, by the good life of another they are rebuked and shamed, they tempt those about them to sin in like manner, and they rest not until they have carried out their evil designs—"have done mischief," and caused "some to fall" by their foul machinations. Often their necessities and their luxuries are acquired, not by honest labour, but by deceit and robbery: "They eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence." These ways of the wicked they who would live righteously must avoid, and they must do so by earnest watchfulness—by keeping their heart, out of which "are the issues of life," with the utmost diligence, by being careful of their words, by acting ever straightforwardly, and by considering the path they are traversing so as to keep in the direct and narrow way of righteousness, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. The progressive, ever-brightening

path of the righteous man is to be now under our consideration, and in this introductory chapter we will just glance at the subject, which we hope afterwards to consider more in detail.

The just or righteous man is he who in those days—under the dispensation now passed away, but in force when these words were written—followed with all diligence the holy commandments of God, striving to keep them not in letter merely, but in spirit also; and, feeling how utterly unable he was to do so, placed his confidence in that Saviour whom he saw by faith in the far distance bruising the serpent's head, and who, he knew—because he who could not lie had promised it—would surely come at the appointed time, and whose great all-sufficient atonement he saw dimly shadowed out in the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the venerated law. In these days of light, knowledge, and privilege, however, the just man implies (in short) the Christian. The man who, believing in a once dead but now living Christ, has once for all committed his soul into the Saviour's keeping, has yielded to the strivings of the Holy Spirit and gone



personally to Jesus, laying upon Him all his many grievous offences, is one who is justified before God. He has received pardon for all the past, and strength and blessing for the future. He is in Jesus Christ an adopted son of God, and an heir of eternal glory. It is in this latter sense that we have to consider the just man—as one who is justified by a living faith in Jesus, and in the strength imparted by the ever-present Holy Spirit is striving to live a holy and blameless life, following in the steps of his Master, with his eyes fixed on the glory beyond the veil; glory which that veil cannot hide, for it breaks forth and in a mitigated degree shines upon his path.

The path of the just man is his life here, his journey through this world of darkness and sin to the heavenly and glorious home prepared for him in the future state. He is not transported suddenly to heaven without any trouble. He becomes indeed a saved man, and an heir of glory, as soon as he accepts by faith the blessed Saviour; but before he comes into his inheritance he generally has to traverse a rough and toilsome

road, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter. Time is a preparation for eternity : this life is a pathway to the next, and according to the time of probation will be, as a rule, the reward. The path of a holy life has been walked in by the Lord Jesus, and in that path, with greater or less deviations through human weakness, must His justified servants walk.

This path "is as the shining light." It is characterised by heavenly illumination, and the life of the Christian is a happy life in proportion as he walks habitually in that path ; the path of integrity and sanctification, marked by the Master's footsteps : in proportion, on the other hand, as he deviates from it to the right hand, or to the left, do clouds overshadow his soul and make him gloomy and unhappy. Nor is it a steady and unvarying light, but a constantly increasing one: it "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It increases steadily until it reaches a climax, like the light of the rising sun, increasing from the grey uncertain twilight of early dawn to the full blaze of mid-day splendour. •

"The perfect day" is that to which the faithful Christian looks forward beyond the grave, and after the great final judgment of souls, and the restoration of all things. It is the glorified state. Then all sin and all sinfulness will be for ever gone; we shall no more grieve the Holy Spirit by our evil deeds, and shall no longer have to mourn over the broken commands of God, confessing ourselves with humble contrition miserable sinners, wandering sheep, and sickly souls. Then we shall be perfectly holy and pure, with the white robe of salvation upon us never again to be soiled, the palm of victory in our hands, and the crown of glory upon our brows. Then the world, the flesh, and the devil will tempt again no more; the sword, the helmet, and the shield will have been laid aside for ever; and we shall have entered into the joy of our Lord.

Then there will be no more pain or sorrow of any kind: this poor body of weakness will have undergone the wondrous change, and suffering in all its forms will be unknown. We shall then be sharing that resurrection glory which the Lord Jesus has taken upon

Himself, and has won for us : we shall have entered upon that eternal inheritance which is ours as sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ : we shall be dwelling in that world of eternal day, needing not the light of the sun, but being illumined directly by Him who is the fountain and origin of light, the Lord God.

The final state of the servant of God is that perfect day towards which his steps are at present tending, and upon which his eyes and his hopes are fixed ; a state of glory indescribable and inconceivable, which he knows he will reach eventually, because it is assured to him by the unfailing promise of an omnipotent and munificent God.

The present life of the man of God is a steady advance towards that perfect, happy, and glorious state : it is the rising upon his soul of the sun of eternal day. There was a time when all was night with him. Enveloped in the dense darkness of sin and ignorance, he knew nought of his danger, and saw not the fearful destruction that lay before him. He walked on in wilful sin to certain death ; death spiritual and eternal. But the Saviour

rescued him. The cry of warning raised by the ambassadors of the King of kings roused him from his lethargy and his dreams, the Spirit opened his eyes to see his fearful danger, and he attended to the call of Jesus and fled to Him from wrath to come. Thus the day-dawn began. The morning star shone forth and showed him the narrow gate: he entered it, and turned his face (as it were) towards the east, where he joyfully discerned at once a streak of light betokening approaching day. The Spirit sheds a ray of light upon the sinner's darkened soul, and shows him where he must seek salvation. He directs him to close with the offers of Jesus, accepting Him as his Saviour by faith, and so to enter upon the path to glory. When he has done so, then he can see that heaven is truly his, and begins to look forward to a happy home beyond the grave. He rejoices in a light, faint indeed at first, which is to him an earnest of future glory. The light increases as he travels on, his path becomes more plain, his falls become less frequent, and he wanders less from Christ. Continually his faith is strengthened, his knowledge of God's Word

and will increase, and he devotes himself more single-heartedly to His service. Thus rises the sun upon his soul, and he rejoices in that light. Clouds indeed overshadow him at times. Sadness comes upon him, faith grows weak, zeal flags, and prayer becomes distasteful. But soon the gloom passes off, and brightness comes again. And so he travels on upon the upward, ever-brightening path, until at last the goal is reached—the sun has mounted to its highest point, the perfect day is rejoiced in, heaven is attained. The sun will never sink again, night will never come, but there will be glory then for ever and ever.

We may observe that the life of a true and earnest Christian is bright in two ways: (1.) It is bright inwardly with peace and joy of spirit; (2.) It is bright outwardly with good works; and so an example to others, and a shining light in a dark and sinful world.

(1.) The troubles and trials of life, often so severe and following one upon another in quick succession, the pains and afflictions necessarily attendant upon our present state of weakness, and the misunderstandings and

hardships which inflict such cruel pangs upon the gentle and sensitive are not withheld from God's chosen and faithful people. And yet they are enabled to feel calm and cheerful amidst them. Not, indeed, at all times, for now and again they fall into murmuring and discontent; but as a general rule and habit of mind. And the cultivation of this calm and cheerful spirit is set before them as an object to be aimed at and sought after, and therefore they crush down the feelings that rise up within, suggested by the natural man, which, though slain, is not yet destroyed, and call up those thoughts which are calculated to awaken the feelings they know are pleasing in the sight of God—feelings of resignation, contentment, and love; and so the spirit is lifted and made happy, and the troubles are in some degree forgotten or laid aside. This they accomplish mainly by lifting up the heart in prayer to God, and quietly meditating upon His holy Word.

Like other men, they have by nature those evil tempers and passions which are in themselves, when roused, miserable and degrading, and necessarily opposed to peace and happi-

ness. And yet in the faithful man they do not habitually destroy them. Knowing that these evil feelings are opposed to the principles of Christianity, and are hateful to the heavenly Master—knowing how hideous and repulsive they are, and that if yielded to they will bring reproach upon the religion he professes, and sadly impair his usefulness, he sets himself to keep them under and thrust them out; and in this, by the blessing of God, he is, step by step, successful. He has, indeed, a new nature at his conversion. The heart of stone is taken away, and a new heart is given him, which loves what is noble, and pure, and gentle—which loves what God loves, and hates what He hates; and that new nature, which is of God, gradually thrusts out the old. And as it is stage by stage expelled, and the man grows in grace, he experiences more and more of that joy and peace in believing which belongs to the servant of God, and which it is His blessed will that all His servants should have.

Thus the warfare with sin and Satan, ever going on within, does not destroy that peace and happiness which the Christian has as a



saved man and an heir of glory ; but it establishes it more and more. There is light ahead. He knows it and can see it, and he is stepping towards it. Eternal glory will be his hereafter. Complete likeness to the Lord Jesus will be by-and-by attained. In some degree he has attained it now ; and day by day, month by month, year by year, he is by the grace of God attaining it more ; and his path, bright from the first heavenward step, is becoming brighter, his hopes more defined, his life more peaceful, his spirit more cheerful.

This inward brightness is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. He is ever employed within, adding grace to grace, knowledge to knowledge, strength to strength. He whispers peace, and imparts joy. He it is who enables the child of God to bear with equanimity trouble and trial, sickness, bereavement, disappointment, anxiety, hardness. He it is who enables him to keep under and gradually destroy his natural passions, which are antagonistic to the gospel of Christ. He it is who enables him to be calm amidst the spiritual struggles of the

way, and causes him to rejoice in a peace passing all understanding. He brings to mind his duty when he is disposed to forget it, and gives him the strength he needs in every hour. He ever hears and answers the longing, anxious cry of a needy spirit, and is there to give him just the help required.

(2.) Our Lord tells His disciples, in His memorable sermon on the mount, that they are the light of the world. They are so by the example which they set—or, at least, this ought to be the case—in the lives which, by God's grace, they lead. Morality, temperance, and charity are great principles of their religion, and follow always upon the acceptance of the Lord Jesus by faith. Thus they are light-bearers, relieving the dense darkness of the world; they are pure livers, preventing society becoming altogether depraved. They shed a light around them which dissipates in some degree the darkness, and illumines the path of others. They shame and provoke others to imitate them in their outward life, and so likewise to be respected, though they have not the inward illumination of the heart that faithful Christians have. So by their

lives they acquire influence with those about them, and this effect of an exemplary life they follow up by uttering words of warning, advice, and encouragement, which, though perfectly useless if not supported by example, are, when so supported, very often successful. Their words are respectfully listened to. The Bible, designed to be a lamp to guide man's steps aright, is opened and perused. The Spirit of God works by its sacred pages. Light begins to dawn upon the benighted, seeking soul. Earnest prayer is resorted to, and adopted as a practice. So by the influence of those already lightened—by that light which their exemplary lives shed about them—the Sun of Righteousness rises upon other souls with healing in His wings, and they in their turn become centres of light, working in the same way for others.

It is undoubtedly the case, and a sad matter it is for contemplation, that Christians very often are not what they ought to be, and what they might be, if they were more earnest in prayer, more habitually and unceasingly watchful, and more diligent in fighting the good fight of faith. It is the Master's will

and intention that they should be lights in a dark and sinful world, and it is their duty, as they wish to serve and please Him, and to be received hereafter by Him with commendation, and to enter into the joy of their Lord, to be so as much as they possibly can. They are commanded to be like a candle set on a candlestick, and a city built upon a hill—visible to all around, and not fearfully and faithlessly to hide away their light as if they were ashamed of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

By means of the light they reflect from Christ upon the world they must draw as many as they can into the same blessed condition of light and privilege. None must think themselves too poor, too humble, or too unlearned to be witnesses for Christ, to enjoy in themselves and to display to others this heavenly light, and by God's grace to impart the same to others. Every one, whatever may be his condition, his worldly position, or his natural attainments, if he be a true and faithful Christian, may do so; and it is his duty, as he loves his Lord, to do so as much as possible. His life presents a bright example

to others in proportion as he grows in grace, is more inwardly illuminated by the Holy Spirit, walks more closely and humbly with his God, becomes more like the Saviour, and draws nearer to the home of infinite and eternal glory, the perfect day in which at last he is to rejoice.

The Christian life is meant by the great Master to be bright and advancing, and therefore it should and may be so, to a greater or less extent, with every one. It is to be bright in defiance of affliction of various kinds, and it may be because the Lord will give us at all times strength according to our needs, if we ask Him. It is to be advancing in defiance of all the difficulties and obstacles met with continually, and it may be because the Lord is always beside us to help and encourage as occasion requires. The Christian must search his own heart, examine his own life, and see if it is indeed thus with him ; he must pray and strive that it may be so, to the glory of God and his own happiness. Then he has proof undoubted that he is truly amongst the people of the Lord ; that he has real, living, and saving faith in Jesus ; that he

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is, in fact, an heir of glory, washed in the Saviour's precious blood, and clothed in the spotless robe of His righteousness; that he is walking through life ever onward, with his eyes fixed on perfect glory and infinite happiness to be attained by him in the future state.

In the following pages we invite the reader's attention to the subject of the Christian's path to glory considered more fully, and pray for the Divine teaching and blessing, that it may be for the glory of God's great name, and the good of precious souls.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ENTRANCE GATE.

“Suddenly, a light,—and a rushing presence,—and a consciousness of something near me,—  
I trembled, and listened, and prayed : then I knew  
the Angel of Life :  
Vague, and dimly visible, mine eye could not behold  
Him,  
As, calmly unimpassioned, He looked upon an erring  
creature ;  
Unseen, my spirit apprehended Him ; though He  
spake not, yet I heard :  
For a sympathetic communing with Him flashed  
upon my mind electric.” TUPPER.

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which  
leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”—  
ST MATT. vii. 14.

IN the Word of God figures are very frequently used to convey ideas of spiritual truths, and so we are enabled to form dim conceptions of many things beyond our comprehension, which could not be clearly explained

to us except by this means. Thus life on earth is represented by two divergent roads, one leading to life eternal, the other to death. The latter is a broad, easy, downward road, entered by a wide gate, through which crowd multitudes of the human race, and they are seen rushing headlong blindly on to the certain death in which that deceptive road terminates. The former is a narrow, uphill path, to which admittance may be gained only by one little gate, and through it there pass continually a few wise-hearted ones, arrested on their downward course by the Spirit's voice, led to that narrow gate, and helped on to the life it promises. There enters now one lonely traveller ; now two or three pass through in company. Death is explained as a fearful lake burning with fire and brimstone, the walls of which resound with groans and cries of anguish, in which the imprisoned souls must be endlessly tormented. Life is spoken of as a beautiful paradise of rest, where peace and joy will ever reign, and every tear be wiped away ; where sin and sorrow will be unknown, and all will be glory and beauty complete.

The Christian, while in this world, is a



stranger and a pilgrim. Hopefully he plods along—guided, guarded, supported by an unseen hand—taking each day the step that lies before him, and trusting his Master for the future—keeping his eye ever fixed upon the light ahead, knowing that there lies his happy home, where will cease at once his journeyings and his sufferings—the Father's house of many mansions, in which Jesus is preparing a place for him. To this home we wish that *everyone* would travel; and they may do so, if they will only enter the strait gate. Having passed through that gate, the life of ever-increasing holiness will follow, and the eternal home of rest and peace at last be gained. This subject, then, of such great primary importance—the entrance gate to life—we will in the present chapter take under our consideration; and may many of those who are now going on the broad road to destruction be led, by God's blessing, to enter the narrow gate, and so be eternally saved.

There is but *one* entrance to the path that leads to eternal life and glory. Satan and our own deceiving hearts will tell us that there are many wide gates that lead to heaven.

From some we hear, that if a man acts according to his conscience—if he does those things that conscience enjoins, and avoids those that conscience forbids, all will be well. They say that if a man is anxious to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of God—if he makes his conscience his rule of life, and acts up to the light which he possesses within him, and so lives as far as he can a morally pure and devout life, his misdeeds will be forgiven by a merciful God, the merits of Christ's atonement will make up for his defects, and he will at last reach the heavenly home.

Though such doctrines exist in the heads, and are to be found in the writings of men, they are not contained in the Bible—nay, they are contrary to the express declarations of that holy and infallible book. We are there told plainly that the salvation of the soul cannot, in any case, be in consequence of man's good works. Justification must be without the works of the law, any law, whether written or instinctive.

Conscience, upon which these moralists lay most stress, is a voice connected with our moral being, which is, indeed, in general to be

the rule of life with each individual who would live a morally pure and blameless life. But conscience cannot be an infallible rule of right and wrong in the abstract. That this is the case seems evident from the fact that the consciences of different men differ from one another, and there can be only one absolute rule of right and wrong for all the human race. We may conclude, however, that conscience, if it has never been weakened by the opposition of the will, or warped by a narrow system of education, will truly direct the man aright, telling him both what is absolutely wrong for all, and what would be dangerous for him in particular, and so conscience may be a law to those who have no higher law. But the law of conscience cannot be followed invariably any more than that higher law which we possess, so that all who are not justified by Christ must stand condemned by the law of conscience, as well as by the law of God.

We who have the lamp of God's Word at hand dare not, surely, make conscience our standard, without being careful to let that light shine upon it, and seeking that it may be regulated by the Spirit of God. There is

no doubt that God speaks to men by the voice of conscience. By it, to a great extent, He guides His people. But those whom He thus guides are already saved, and that by which He guides them is an *enlightened* conscience. The sinner's conscience is a crushed and stifled thing, with a weak voice only to be heard now and then when a deed of undoubted sinfulness is meditated, or with a deceiving voice, dictating unnecessary scruples, and keeping silence in matters of real importance. Thus conscience cannot be a gate to heaven, though it is a help on the road *after the gate is entered*.

We hear from others that Baptism is a gate to heaven. They tell us that those who are baptized, being regenerated by water and the Spirit, and being admitted into the fold of the Church of Christ, are safe for that blessed and glorious haven of eternal rest and happiness if they are careful to perform good works, are moral, kind, and charitable, attend diligently and regularly all the services of the Church, neglect not the important duty of private devotions, and act according to the directions of their spiritual advisers, the mouth-pieces of the Church.

Baptism is, no doubt, a sacred and most important ordinance, ordained by Christ, and insisted upon by Him when pointing out the way of salvation, whereby persons are admitted into the Church ; and in the case of infants baptized unconsciously, or of adults coming to it with true repentance and faith, purity and grace are surely bestowed by virtue of the atonement of Christ. Yet baptism is not the gate to heaven, for a baptized person may be a lost soul, as is proved by the case of Simon Magus, who, though baptized, was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." There is but one gate to heaven, and all who have passed through that gate are on the road thither.

It is also a *narrow* gate. It can only be entered, as it were, at one point. To deviate on this side or that, is to miss it, and to be travelling still on the broad road to destruction. It is not enough to be very near getting through. It is not enough almost to grasp the truth, or to be nearly saved. To be almost saved, and yet to be lost, is as bad as never to have glimpsed the narrow gate—nay, it is far worse, for the remembrance of a life-

long self-deception, and the fact of accumulation of privileges, will greatly add to the miseries of a lost soul in the world to come. And yet to how many is the way of salvation pointed out in vain. The one gate and how alone it can be entered is plainly shown them, week by week they hear the same message of love, and see the finger of the Gospel pointed in the same direction, they hear the warnings of the one way and the promises of the other, but they still continue their fatal journey along the broad road, and at last are lost for ever. Oh! listen to what the Word of God tells us is the one narrow entrance gate to life.

*This gate is the Lord Jesus Christ.* Through Him alone we enter into a state of salvation ; through Him alone we enter upon a holy life. He came into the world, and died for us. He offered Himself a sinless substitute for sinful men. Had He not done this, not a single soul could have been saved. Surely it must be clear to all, if they think, that had it not been necessary He would not have come and endured all He did. But, knowing that to be man's only hope, God, in His great love to us

rebellious ones, sent His only begotten Son to die that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Through Him alone it is that any of us are saved souls, and until we are thus saved we cannot lead a holy life, doing what is pleasing in the sight of God, and walking constantly with Him. For "two cannot walk together except they be agreed": a holy life can only be the result of the grace of God, and to Him our works are only good as seen in the Lord Jesus. The thirteenth Article of our Church speaks "of works before justification" in these words:—"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Thus, then, by Jesus Christ *alone* we are justified and enter upon the holy life that leads to heaven.

How do we enter that heavenward path by Jesus Christ? By believing in Him. "Be-

lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the plain declaration of the Apostle Paul. We must believe in Him as the great God-man of whom Scripture gives us an account. We must believe that being perfect God and perfect man, He thus became the one Mediator between God and man ; and that He became so at a great, a wondrous cost, even that of a life of suffering, ending in a death of intensest agony and deepest shame, the climax of His anguish being that as He drew His dying breath with the weighty burden of man's every sin hanging on His shoulders, His Father's face, which ever before had beamed upon Him as His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, was for the time averted from Him, and His human soul was darkened and tormented by the frown of God. We must believe that He burst open the gates of Hades, bridged over the river of death, severed the bands of the grave, rose on the third day triumphant from the dead, and as He did so looked back upon a completed work, and finally ascended to the highest heaven, to take His place at the right hand of the throne of God, where He



ever liveth to intercede for man. We must believe that, by virtue of the Lord's death and resurrection, man may stand before God as an accepted servant, an adopted son, his every sin having been completely atoned for : so that every sinner, hardened and degraded by years of sin though he be, may be freed from all condemnation, and escape the punishment that must follow sin, if he will but accept that great and glorious atonement. We must believe that, though the redeemed and justified man go down into Hades and his body sink into the grave, he will rise again hereafter, and dwell, a happy and immortal being, in a renewed and purified and eternal world, spending uncounted and unending ages in the presence and under the smile of Jesus, his beloved Redeemer and Master.

These things we must believe to have entered the strait gate ; and yet we may believe all this, and still be on the broad road to ruin. All this may be believed intellectually without there being any *saving faith* ; for by a merely intellectual belief we cannot be justified. The belief of which St Paul speaks as bringing salvation, the faith by which we

enter the strait gate, though involving this, goes far beyond it. It is a firm personal trust in the Lord Jesus, producing visible and practical results.

Believing all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, and relying implicitly on those gracious promises made in God's holy Word in connection with that glorious work and emanating from it, we must trust Him for everything. Believing in the fulness and completeness of the redemption He has wrought out, the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice He has made once for all, and the universality of the pardon He has thereby purchased for us, we must commit our precious souls into His keeping. We must believe and feel assured that all our own personal sins were laid upon Him as He hung upon the accursed tree, and that now we stand before God perfectly justified, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, seen by God only in Him. We must believe that to us, *personally* and *individually*, there is now no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus, united to Him by faith, one with Him as He is one with the Father, living in Him by sharing His resurrection life. We

must believe that we have in us nothing good that comes not from Him, and that by His Spirit every good thought, word, or action is suggested and prompted. So must our eyes ever rest on Him as the source and fountain of all goodness. We must believe in, and strive to realise as fully as possible, His continual presence, not merely with the Church at large, but with ourselves individually. So may we feel that when we bend the knee in prayer He stands beside our prostrate soul: when we raise the voice in praise and thanksgiving, He beholds and blesses the uplifted spirit. He shares our every joy and sorrow, allays our fears, confirms our hopes, and strengthens our weaknesses.

Faith is *trust in God*—trust in Him as One who cannot lie or deceive, the promiser of unbounded blessings; trust in Him as the great High Priest and sacrifice, the justifier of all who believe; trust in Him as the Spirit of might and wisdom, the sanctifier and the guide of all the justified. When we are able thus truly and personally to trust in Him, the Triune God, we have entered the strait gate that leads to life. The possession of this

faith within must have a practical effect upon our outward life—the entrance of the narrow gate must be followed by the traversing of the heavenward road. Being justified by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus we must live no longer for the world but for God, cultivating all heavenly virtues, growing in grace, advancing in faith, hope and charity, and striving after purity, holiness, and a close walk with God.

There being, as we have seen, but *one* gate leading to life, and that a narrow one, comparatively few, alas! succeed in finding it. Our Lord says, "Few there be that find it." There is so much to counteract the influence of the Spirit, an evil heart of unbelief within, an evil seducing spirit without, exercising such a mighty opposing influence that comparatively few are persuaded to leave the fatal paths of sin, with all their deceiving allurements, their intoxicating pleasures, their care-drowning excitements, notwithstanding their soul-destroying properties. Some come very near, and yet miss their aim. Some, like the miserable Balaam, gaze at, admire, and wish for a far distant salvation, but will not take a

single step, or give up a single gratification to acquire it ; and so the beautiful and pleasing vision fades away from view : then, if they look a-head, they see but a dark and lurid chasm of torment ; if they contemplate the present, they find nothing but disappointment and vexation of spirit.

And yet, though comparatively few find that strait gate, it is, as we find in the Apocalypse, only *comparatively*. In that prophetic vision that rolled before St John on the lonely isle of Patmos, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9 and 10.)

"Enter ye in at the strait gate." It is always standing open now, though the time will come when the master of the house shall rise up and shut to the door, and sad will it be in that day for all those unhappy ones who are still standing outside. In vain will

they knock at the door, and cry as they stand without, "Lord, Lord, open unto us:" He will answer them from within, "I know you not whence ye are." But now the heavenly portal is open wide, and *all* are called to enter. Enter then, ye that are standing hesitating, uncertain which course to take. Enter, ye that are making swift progress in the paths of sin, for "the end thereof are the ways of death."

Enter the strait gate, if you value your immortal soul. Let not Satan and false teachers deceive you with the notion that there are other ways by which you may be saved than this one. "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders," said St Peter to the Jewish rulers, elders, and scribes, gathered together in council, "which is become the head of the corner. *Neither is there salvation in any other*: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 11, 12.) By Jesus only you can be delivered from eternal death. That precious immortal soul of yours must be saved by Jesus, if it is to be saved at all. A holy life is the path that leads to

the heavenly kingdom of eternal light and glory. At the commencement of a holy life, just at the entrance, stands Jesus. Come then to Him at once. Put your whole trust in Him, accept Him as your Saviour, seek justification and life through Him alone, and all will be well in time and in eternity.

Enter the strait gate if you desire happiness. The path of life upon which we enter when we come to Jesus, is (as I hope to show in future pages) a happy path, because as we travel upon it we have the presence of Jesus, and look forward to the enjoyment of that presence more completely when the pilgrimage is ended. The life of the Christian, as well as that of the worldling, has its sorrows, its disappointments, its anxieties, its pains; but the presence of Jesus gives alleviation in all these, so that in the midst of sorrow there is often peace, and in the midst of pain there is often joy. And then, hereafter, there will surely be an eternity of unspeakable bliss. To secure these solid pleasures now and for ever we must come to Jesus. He invites, He calls, He entreats *all* to come to Him *now*.

*“Strive to enter in at the strait gate,”* for it necessitates often a great struggle, as there are many mighty foes would keep us back. But when we have come to Jesus, when He has stretched forth His mighty arm and drawn us to Him, notwithstanding all the difficulties and obstacles in the way, for they are nothing to Him, then we have at once salvation. We need not have a single misgiving as to the result of the lifelong battle and journey, for the Lord will complete that which He has begun in us, and we shall increase in His Holy Spirit more and more until we come unto His everlasting kingdom. It is when we find ourselves going from strength to strength, and from grace to grace, that we know that we have passed from death unto life, have entered indeed the narrow gate, and are travelling on the celestial path that ends in eternal glory.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE TOILING NATURE OF THE PATH.

" Life is real ! Life is earnest !  
And the grave is not its goal ;  
' Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'  
Was not spoken of the soul.

. . . . .  
" Let us then be up and doing  
With a heart for any fate ;  
Still achieving, still pursuing  
Learn to labour and to wait."

LONGFELLOW.

" The labour of the righteous tendeth to life : the fruit of the wicked to sin."—Prov. x. 16.

THE life of the world taken as a whole is one of earnest continuous toil. If we pass along at midday, or any other time of a business day, one of the commercial streets of London, the great metropolis of the world, we get a fair idea of what life in this world really is. It is not an empty dream,

but a stern reality. It is not an easy, quiet passing away of time, but the compulsory performance of many an arduous duty, or the straining after the gratification of some great ambition, or, at least, the struggle to acquire a little money wherewith to purchase the necessities, and some of the gratifications of life. Upon every face is plainly written unsatisfied desires. The quick, decided, straight onward step of each indicates a fixed purpose, and the intention of carrying that purpose out, if possible. Self-advancement and personal gain seem to be the uppermost thoughts in every mind, as each man, hurrying along the street, jostles all who come in his way, heedless of rank and character. And yet though at that moment the one fixed purpose of each may be of a selfish nature, and the success of his own business, the carrying out of his own designs, and the performance of his own duties, the paramount feeling of his soul, underneath there lies a tender and feeling heart ; a heart that can be touched by the woes, and will respond to the requests of brothers in affliction and want. For (in the words of Bishop O'Brien) "they

take a narrow and very erroneous view of man's nature, who regard him as necessarily and uniformly governed by self-love. A fairer consideration of the human mind would show that a love of others forms an essential part of it, no less than a love of ourselves. It contains, besides, a number of subordinate propensities, clearly distinct from either principle, and having appropriate objects altogether different from the interests of others or our own. And in action, this concern for our own happiness sometimes combines with, sometimes opposes, our desire for the happiness of others; while each of the principles, at times, finds itself aided, and, at times, resisted, by some of those other propensities of our nature; is sometimes overmastered by them sometimes overcomes them. So that the whole man is, at times, governed by a combination of his desires, and, at times, by some single one—by self-love or benevolence; or by some passion or appetite, which, ruling him at the moment, hurries him in the pursuit of its proper object, not merely with the same injury, eventually, to his own interest, as to his neighbour's, but with the same disregard, at the moment, for both."

Our subject is, however, the state of the world with regard to labour. Taken as a whole it is undoubtedly, in one way or another, a toiling, suffering world. It is so from the days of Adam, when it was said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Man is not born into the world for nothing, or to do nothing. Every man has something to do, and if he wishes not to be worthless lumber in a world of useful activity he will find out what that work is, and will do it as well as he can. These labourers are divided into two classes: the ungodly, living and working for this world only, and Christians, living and working mainly for the world to come. These two classes differ not so much in the work they do as in the motives that prompt them to work, and the tendency of their work.

With the former the incentives to labour are worldly, and mainly, or in a great degree, selfish, and the results tend for the most part to sin. They often tend to sin in a very direct way, inasmuch as the profits acquired thereby are often spent in sinful indulgence and sensual gratification. They also tend

indirectly to it, inasmuch as the life thereby prolonged is a sinful life, and the influence acquired by hard and steady labour is all on the side of evil, and of Satan the prince of evil, and the father of lies and deceptions. Thus, and in other ways, we may say that "the fruit of the wicked tendeth to sin."

As, therefore, the incentives to labour with the ungodly are worldly, they will not work except they hope thereby to acquire some worldly gain or advantage. But with the Christian man it is, or should be, different. He is bound to work according to his ability, whether his position as regards this world necessitates it or not. He serves a greater, a higher, a mightier Master than the greatest prince, the mightiest monarch the earth can produce. That exalted Master will have in His honoured employment no useless servants: all must take the position, and do the work His wisdom allots them. Those duties are very various. Some are very arduous and responsible, some are very monotonous and uninteresting, some are very agreeable and suit exactly the individual's tastes and disposition. Sometimes the work is merely the patient

endurance of suffering, or such as can be performed in the midst of feebleness and pain. But whatever may be its peculiar character, so that it be the duty set us by God, the work of our station in life, or that which our hand findeth to do, it is to be done with all the might as unto the Lord. The Christian's life is to be a following as far as possible in the footsteps of Christ, and what a life of incessant work was His. It is to be one of obedience to His injunctions, and the tenor of those injunctions is, Work while it is day, for the night draweth quickly nigh.

If the Christian's work is to benefit himself in this life—if he has to work for his daily bread, or is pressing on to a more honourable and influential position, these worldly results should not be the *motives* of his toil. He should have far higher motives than that; motives that will make hard work, and thorough work, not merely a matter of conscience, but even a source of enjoyment; motives that will enable him to engage with cheerfulness and contentment in the most laborious and distasteful occupations. The great motive principle of his life must be nothing less

than the pleasing of his heavenly Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. As he goes to his daily toil let him realize that he is going on his Lord's behest, and let his heart be lifted in prayer for a blessing upon him in his work, and that it may be successfully, thoroughly, and cheerfully done. Too often the daily task is felt to be a dark cloud upon the life, but going to it in this spirit, he will do so with a light heart and buoyant step; and then it will be to him, entering a cloud, perhaps, but a bright cloud through which can be seen his Master's smiling face. At times, when faith is burning low, it will seem the heavy burden that it is to others; but again the flickering flame will be rekindled, the sinking heart will be upraised, and the work will be joyous work again. For Christ, not for the earthly master, not for worldly gains, must the Christian work. In *all things* his aim must be to please Him.

If his worldly position does not compel him to work—if he is a man of independent means, with no regular and fixed employment, and without worldly ambition, he must not be an idle drone. He must work, nevertheless. A

great mistake it is to think that a man's work is done, as soon as he is in a worldly point of view independent. No man's work is done till God calls him to resign his house of clay, and his bones are laid in their last resting-place beneath the sod. It is a truism often quoted, that man is immortal till his work is done; equally true is it, though not so readily admitted, that as long as a man has life there is work for him to do. This the Christian ought to feel. Though not compelled to do so, still he must work, and that as hard and as earnestly as if he had a set employment, being anxious to please his Master in heaven. He must work for the good of others, and the glory of God.

The independent man is able to work more directly for God than others. A highly privileged man is he, and a very responsible position does he occupy. Much time and influence are at his disposal, and both these the Christian man should devote to God, and the good of his fellow creatures. He must seek for guidance from above as to how they are to be employed, and then a sphere of work will open up before him. *Any* of His servants who



wish to be employed by Him, God will willingly employ. And great is the work He does by means of feeble though willing instruments; its magnitude will not be known till the day arrives when strange disclosures will be made. None are too feeble, too poor, or too ignorant in themselves to work for Him, if they are strengthened, enriched, and taught by the Holy Spirit: none are so strong, so rich, so learned as to be able, without that Spirit, to do any good to the soul of man.

That the Christian's life is to be a working life, and not a life of ease, is shown, as well as in other ways, by one of our Lord's references to the great day of reckoning. He will say, we are told, "Well *done*, good and faithful servant." He will not say, "Well *thought*," "well *felt*," "well *wished*," but "well *done*." We are further shown it by the fact that the future life is spoken of as the *rest that remaineth to the people of God* (Heb. iv. 9); if they have done no work they will need no rest; but it is evidently taken for granted by the apostle who wrote it, and the Holy Spirit who dictated it, that those who come to the peaceful haven purchased by the blood of Jesus have

toiled hopefully and faithfully along the path that leads to it; a path narrow, direct, and uphill, with many a rough stone and sharp thorn to be encountered thereon.

For every Christian man and woman the Lord has some employment, and all those who wish to serve and please Him, and to make progress towards His heavenly kingdom, will be anxious to do faithfully the work that He assigns to them, and should be on the look-out for it. The cry of their heart should be like that of Saul when arrested in his mad career: "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Then the Lord will surely direct them continually. Their hand will find that to do which is pleasing in His sight, and they will have strength given them to perform it with thoroughness and perseverance. The Lord directs those who ever seek His guidance in a very clear and unmistakable manner. He does so in various ways, sometimes by means of those with whom they are thrown from time to time, sometimes by the direct inclination of the will, sometimes (and very generally) by the arrangement of circumstances.

With some the task He sets is merely what would lie before them, so far as we can see, whether they be Christians or not, the ordinary duties of life. When this is the case, we must not fancy that we are not working for Him, and that He does not regard the way and the spirit in which it is done. He does notice it very minutely. He observes the parent cherishing with loving care the children He has given them, and bringing them up in His knowledge, faith, and fear. He observes the housewife arranging all the affairs, and controlling all the members of her household. He observes the servant, whether sweeping the room, preparing and serving up food for the master or mistress, or whatever may be the occupation of the moment. He observes the clerk in his office, the shopman behind his counter, the mechanic at his tools, the labourer in the field. He notices the work of each. He also watches the master and mistress, and sees how they deal with those under them. Thus, upon every Christian man and woman, whatever his position, whatever his employment, His eye continually rests, and his work being for Him, He notices how it is done, and

what is his prevailing motive as he performs it. The Christian must try to do his or her work, whatever it may be, thoroughly and faithfully, *because* it is the work that God has set, and He is felt to be looking down and noticing how it is done, and according to the faithful performance of the work in life will be the reward hereafter. No duty is so small as to be beneath His regard: no position is so humble as not to be considered by Him.

With others the work He appoints is unselfish work in His great vineyard of precious souls. He calls them to devote their lives to the good of others, the leading of dying souls to Jesus that they may have life, and the comforting and building up of His faithful people. It is not only to the ordained ministers of His Gospel that He appoints this honourable work, but to many others also. To those who have no fixed employment in the world, and to those who have no family and social ties He gives the call to unselfish deeds of philanthropy, and direct work for Him. Those who have much leisure on their hands are solemnly responsible to Him for those leisure hours. How are they employed? Are they

spent in these useful labours, or are they occupied in doing nothing particular, in novel reading or frivolity? Let the first be the case with all. It will be to their own satisfaction and happiness now, their own eternal good, and the advantage, present and eternal, of others.

How may private persons work directly for Christ? In very various ways, from Sunday school teaching, and the influencing of servants and dependants upwards. To each one the work that he is to do must be suggested by the Lord, and he must enter upon, and engage in it heartily. But let me remind all those who would work for Christ successfully, that their own behaviour is a matter of very great primary importance. Let them set a good example; let them by their lives adorn the Gospel they believe and proclaim; let them show themselves amiable, gentle, loving, and forbearing to all, then will their words come with power and effect, and sink into the hearts and bring forth fruit in the lives of many a previously dead and careless one. Very jealously must Christian workers watch their own conduct that they bring not re-

proach upon the Gospel, or throw a stumbling-block in the way of the weak believer, or the sceptic inclined to turn to the truth.

But there is yet another task the Lord sets many of His people, the most difficult perhaps of all, and that is patient suffering. He lays them by upon a bed of sickness. Years of pain and weakness, sleepless nights and weary days are their portion here. Their duty is to bear patiently and cheerfully that burden, heavy as it is, which the Lord has laid upon them. He gives them grace to do so. Upon the bed of feebleness, in the midst of pain, there is tranquillity; for the Prince of Peace reigns within the heart, and when the storms of repining and discontent begin to rise He whispers—as He did to the raging elements on the Galilean lake—“Peace, be still.”

Patient suffering! Not the lethargy of despair, not resignation to a fate they know it is vain to battle against; but the elevation of the soul above the pains of this life, arising from the possession of a heart-peace, a spiritual joy which far outweighs the bodily sufferings. It is beautiful, and it is a mighty testimony to the truth of the Gospel we believe, and proves

that heaven, to which we look forward for our happiness after all the troubles of this life are past and gone, is a reality and not a myth, since these taste of it whilst still on earth—have a faint foretaste of what is to be hereafter.

Nor are these idle Christians, though confined mostly to a single house, sometimes to a bed, for many long and weary years. They exercise a quiet influence over all about them, all who come to visit them, and that influence is more extensive than they think, and is a power in the cause of Christ's Gospel in the world. Nobody knows—though it will be known, perhaps, at the judgment day—what an impetus is given to true and vital religion by sick and suffering Christians. From sick-rooms religion flows like a pure stream, cleared of all the narrownesses and petty follies which the human mind so often mingles with it; freed from sceptical defects, from ritualistic taint, from puritanic scrupulosities.

We should be ready, by His grace, to do and bear whatever the Lord appoints us, looking up to Him for strength to perform the appointed task faithfully, and feeling ever as we

toil on that our labours tend to life eternal, through Him who redeemed us with a glorious redemption, and loves us with an everlasting love. For having entered the narrow gate by trusting in Jesus we are now treading the rough and uphill path that leads to glory, and the happy home of many mansions prepared for all His people.

Let us ever bear in mind, then, that the path to heaven is a path of toil. We do not, indeed, get to heaven by our good works, but by the Lord Jesus Christ, the strait gate upon which we dwelt in our last chapter. But having within us a living faith, which brings us life, good works—the striving to please Him who hath done for us such great things—must accompany and spring from it. In this matter sad and fatal mistakes are made, and Satan does all he can to deceive people with regard to it. Some he will tell that a mere intellectual assent to the truths of God's revealed Word is faith, and is all that is necessary for salvation ; and that we have no reason to seek for the practical results which the Bible tells us are absolutely essential to a living faith. Others he will tell that good works will pur-



chase heaven, without any heartfelt repentance and personal transaction with the Lord Jesus. Both these are errors and falsehoods, as the Bible plainly shows. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." These are the words of the Lord himself. The apostle St James says: "Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

If we examine our lives—and it is wise to do so from time to time—and find that we are going smoothly on through life, taking it easy, and feeling no anxiety to work for Him, and no love stirring our hearts, we may well suspect the road we are traversing, and it will be wise to consider carefully whether we are on the narrow path or the wide road. If we are not on the former, let us come to Christ with penitence and confess our sins, and doubts

and fears will flee apace, faith will rise within, the strait gate will be entered, salvation will be ours and the pilgrimage begun. But if any of us feel that, no matter how imperfectly, we can and do trust our souls in the hands of Jesus ; that love to Him does, in some slight degree, animate our hearts, and that that love does prompt us to work as well as we can from the one motive of serving and glorifying Him ; that we are trying to live holy and religious lives in order to please Him, and that we are gradually advancing and making progress by His grace in every good word and work : then we may feel sure that we are truly in Christ, and must pray continually that increased strength may be given us, more faith, more love, more peace, more earnestness, and, to that end, avail ourselves of every means of grace which the Lord has so graciously provided us.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord ” (1 Cor. xv. 58).

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SNARES AND FOES BESETTING THE PATH.

“ Then turn thee, for thy time is short,  
But trace not o’er the former way,  
Lest idol pleasures court  
Thy heedless soul astray.”—KEBLE.

“ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like  
men, be strong.”—1 COR. xvi. 13.

THE subject of our last chapter was the Christian life considered as one of earnest work, or patient suffering; in the present we propose to discuss the great warfare with mighty and subtle foes which the Christian has to maintain, demanding continual struggling for the mastery and watchfulness.

Just as, though we do not and cannot merit heaven by works, we still are bound, if truly Christian people, to work according to the ability that God giveth, so, though we cannot possibly fight our own way to heaven,

still it is necessary for us to fight with all our might if we would safely reach it. We must fight distrusting ourselves, but trusting our great Leader ; we must fight not in our own way, but in the way that He enjoins ; we must fight not with weapons of our own devising and construction, but with those that He places in our grasp.

But fighting is of small avail if not accompanied by watchfulness. The two must go together. If we would progress upon the path of Christian work, we must engage with those enemies that surround and oppose us, and be on our guard against those subtle devices whereby they try to keep us back and lead us astray. Let us apply to ourselves, and ever keep in our memories, the important injunction of the Apostle St Paul, quoted above, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

Many are the enemies, many the snares, that surround the Christian on every side. This we are plainly told, and any who are trying to live holy and blameless lives, following and imitating Jesus, keeping His commandments, and living in love and purity,

will feel, and confess very readily indeed, that such is truly the case. They find it very hard, they meet with great opposition from every quarter, and many a time they fall. But for their mighty Leader, their great spiritual Captain, they could not gain the victory, but would be surely vanquished ; being aided and strengthened thus, however, they are made "*more than conquerors.*" In the triumphant words of St Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35-39). Not all the powers of darkness banded together ; not all those mighty influences which the king of evil has at his dis-

posal ; "nothing lofty presenting a visible opposition, an open defiance ; and nothing profound, working by insidious machination" (Dr Vaughan) ; nothing, of whatever description, can permanently overcome those who are trusting their souls in the hands of Jesus, living in Him, and, with the Spirit's help and guidance, striving to follow and live for Him. On the contrary, everything that opposes them must eventually be overcome. Nothing can separate the Christian soul from Christ. Everything must be overcome as he struggles on to heaven ; overcome in the strength of the interceding Jesus, and the Spirit dwelling in His struggling servant.

The great enemy against whom we have to contend is Satan, the monarch of the kingdom of darkness ; and he has under his control a multitude of evil spirits, so that, though personally limited to one place at a time, by his agents he is almost omnipresent. His power, his knowledge, and his wisdom are vast, surpassed by God's only. He is the adversary. He is man's great opponent now, and will be his accuser in the day of judgment. He tempts in various ways, suiting in

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every case the temptation to the temperament of the individual, and persevering in presenting one temptation after another, hoping, if each succeeds, to overwhelm the soul ; if each fails, to succeed at last. He tempts by exciting the passions, by rousing the feelings, by working upon the fancy, by leading into a worldly atmosphere, by suggesting doubts, by clothing lies with the garb of truth and putting them into the mind ; even by suggesting thoughts and feelings in themselves good, but having evil effects, for he is able to transform himself into an angel of light.

He makes use of various baits for the purpose of catching his victims. For the ruin of souls he employs money, fame, love, hatred, and thousands of other principles. Hence the majority of persons are occupied in pursuing things which exist only in fevered brains and excited fancies ; or if they have some real substance, and are acquired at last, they prove a bitter disappointment. Satan displays to the credulous mind of man a glittering display of tawdry trifles to lure him on to ruin. Alas ! how often he is

successful! Only the grace of Christ can baffle him.

Another great antagonist is the body, with all its desires and passions. This is an ever-present foe, a part of ourselves dangerously in league with Satan. This is a traitor within the citadel, ready at all times to open the gates and admit the enemy, continually communicating to the outer foe the weak points of the character, and helping him to assail successfully the fortress of the heart; ever ready to rebel against Him who has taken up His abode within, and to raise hideous and worthless idols to a position above the throne He occupies, which must be hurled to the ground by stern—and merciful in their very sternness—dispensations of His providence.

This treacherous body must be fought with and subdued. In 1 Cor. ix. St Paul tells us in what light he viewed his body, and how he dealt with it. He says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." That is, I bruise my body as the pugilist does the face of his opponent; I beat it under, and



force it into slavery, lest, perchance, having heralded others to the contest, I myself prove reprobate—fail to be approved for the prize at the examination that follows the conflict. The bodily passions, whether malicious or vicious, are of course confessedly antagonistic to the Gospel of Christ. They present a barrier to Christ swaying the man completely, they will not permit His reigning supreme within the heart. Therefore they are foes to be fought with, beaten down, and enslaved. They must be forced into subjection. To ignore their existence, or to shrink from waging war with them is fatal. The Christian life demands their suppression, for they stand between us and holiness; Christian love demands it, for they stand between us and the Saviour; Christian hope demands it, for they stand between us and heaven.

Subduing the body is depriving Satan of his greatest ally, and delivering the soul from its most insidious foe. "This I say, then," says St Paul, "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the

one to the other" (Gal. v. 16, 17). "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. viii. 13). There is, then, a direct necessary antagonism between the soul dwelt in by the Spirit of Christ and the body swayed by death-bringing passions. The latter, therefore, must be viewed as a subtle and treacherous foe to be contended with and subdued, and with a strong hand to be kept down, and made to serve, instead of opposing, the Spirit.

A third great enemy is the world, with its multitudinous allurements and fascinations. The world, of course, I take in its received religious sense, implying the affairs, the pursuits, the pleasures of the world that lieth in wickedness, as opposed to Christ and His Gospel. Upon this subject it is needless—nay, impossible here—to dwell in detail. All truly Christian people will recognise the world as a foe—a foe to their spiritual life to be resisted and beaten from their path. But they often find it difficult to get the limits of the sinful or dangerous world clearly defined, and to make up their minds whether certain things

are right, and may be engaged in harmlessly, or not. They see little harm in this and that, and are often led, though perhaps with faltering steps and uneasy mind, to indulge in pleasures which are decidedly worldly, and have undoubtedly an evil tendency and produce evil effects upon the soul, because they are according to the depraved tastes and fashions of society, the laws of which are by no means regulated by Christian principle. There is, however, one grand rule that we can give to all those who wish to follow Christ single-heartedly whereby to test every pleasure, everything they engage in—and that is, first of all, to ask themselves, as standing before the great Searcher of hearts, Can I solemnly, devoutly, conscientiously kneel down and ask the Lord to bless me in this thing, to go with me, and to make it beneficial to me, and fit me the better to serve Him afterwards, and the more earnestly to work for His glory? Thus may the Christian disarm the world of its weapons, as far as his own soul is concerned, and he *must* strive to put it out of his way.

Satan, using as instruments of his malice

the world and the flesh, and working upon a heart which, though dwelt in by the Spirit of Christ, is wayward and sadly predisposed to sin, and is more or less easily duped, lays many a snare for the feet of those who love the Lord, and desire to serve and please Him. Traps are laid with such subtilty that they often catch the Lord's servants unawares, and cause them to fall into the mire of sin and soil their white robes, which they desire to keep as pure and undefiled as they can while passing through this world of sin and pollution. This being the case, these subtle snares being often met with, and our longings being towards holiness and purity, and being often assailed by more open foes, we must, in order to press onward to the heavenly goal, watch with all carefulness, and fight with all boldness and perseverance.

In this, however, we must not think of trusting to ourselves, or to any human helpers. There are some who are of strong and determined characters, who are able with a mighty hand to control and influence others, and so can work out their plans, and to a great extent have their own way in the world, who think that by their own wills—strong, indeed, as far as human

strength goes—they can restrain the desires of the flesh, resist the allurements of the world, overcome the temptations of Satan, and live a holy and pure life, without that continual down-pouring of spiritual strength which is usually considered so essential. These efforts, however, directed against such foes, result in miserable spiritual defeat. Again, there are others who feel that they have no strength of their own, but that they are weak and vacillating creatures, carried about by every wind of temptation, and falling into every snare of the devil that comes in their way, and yet desire to serve and please the Lord and live a holy life. These sensitively feeble ones are disposed to seek the aid of some stronger human arm, some wiser and more wary mind, to rest upon, to seek advice and strength from, instead of going to Him who is the fountain of all true wisdom, the source of all true strength, and who can and will communicate these things to all who seek them. The result in this case is the same miserable failure. A strong will is, indeed, to those who possess it an inestimable blessing, but they must

beware of trusting to it in their spiritual conflicts: a strong human friend to lean upon is to the naturally weak a blessing for which they may be truly and deeply thankful, but with such they must not be satisfied. Whether strong naturally, or weak, we all must seek continually help and direction from the Lord of hosts, the God of our salvation, if we would not yield to the assaults and fall into the traps of our spiritual foes. We must avoid the snares of the devil by lifting up the heart continually with the prayer, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." We must walk upon life's treacherous path, watching anxiously ourselves, but at the same time looking up to Jesus to guide our steps, that we may not be betrayed into sinful falls.

And in our warfare we must look to the same source for strength and victory. We must be armed with heavenly armour, and we must fight in faith and confidence—not in ourselves, for our strength is utter weakness, but in the Lord, who helpeth us. In Eph. vi. 10-18, St Paul tells us how we must be armed for our spiritual conflicts. He says,

### **The Snares and Foes besetting the Path.**

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“ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Having to fight with spiritual beings, evil angels, we must do so under the banner of the cross, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, armed with divine

armour, and mighty in the Lord. We must fight by faith. Fighting so, the victory is *sure*. We need have no misgivings, no fear; we are sure to conquer finally. As has been already remarked above, fighting in Christ we shall be "*more than conquerors*;" and when the strife, the journey, and the dangers are passed, we shall enter into eternal happiness and peace, we shall receive the crown of glory "that fadeth not away," we shall go to be "with Christ which is far better" than remaining here, and eventually we shall form part of the great multitude that for ever praise God that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb that was slain.

But our spiritual warfare is not merely defensive: it is more than that. We are not only to defend the citadel, but we are to make hostile incursions into the enemy's land, and so to extend the boundaries of the kingdom of Christ. We must not do this proudly, relying on any natural talents we may possess—eloquence, tact, clearness of intellect, or argumentative power—so as to lay ourselves open to temptation under adverse circumstances, and run into dangers



with which we have not power to cope ; but we must do it humbly, trusting in the Lord, led by Him, and having on the whole armour of God.

Of this kind of warfare St Paul seems to speak in 2 Cor. x. 3-6, where he says : " For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh : for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds ; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled." Being careful of our own spiritual life, resisting by prayer and watchfulness the temptations that assail us personally, and living ourselves consistent lives in faith and obedience, we are to assail and help to pull down, according as we may be directed by the Lord Jesus, the strongholds of Satan. We are to overturn by divine strength those specious arguments which are employed by the servants of Satan, whether human or devilish, against that holy

Book which conveys to us the true knowledge of God, the existence and universal supremacy of that God to whom we owe our life and breath and all things, and that glorious Gospel upon which our happiness, our peace, our eternity depends. These presumptuous and false declarations we are to overthrow by means of those weapons which "are not carnal, but mighty through God," and spread abroad as earnestly as possible that true knowledge of God which, by His grace, we have made our own, and which is conveyed to us in His Son Jesus Christ, and thus "God will make them mighty to bring down proud 'reasonings' into obedience to Christ, and to punish all who remain disobedient when the rest . . . . are completely brought to submit" (Par. Bib. of R. T. Soc.). Conybeare and Howson, in their "Life and Epistles of St Paul," remark upon this passage: "We should notice the completeness of the military allegory. The image is that of a campaign against rebels: rock-forts (such as those on St Paul's own Cilician coast) must be cast down: and when the general obedience of the country is secured, those who are still

rebellious must be summarily punished." Thus then, armed with these spiritual weapons, we are to fight in the Lord's strength in self-defence, for the destruction of the kingdom of His enemy, and for the spread of His own eternal kingdom.

Having then, dear Christian reader, made your peace with God by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, by putting your whole trust and confidence in Him, by getting from Him by earnest prayer that pardon and that grace which He is so willing and anxious to bestow, take earnest and active part in this great spiritual warfare. To this end be watchful, that you be not suddenly surprised and taken off your guard, and so overpowered by temptation. Watch the secret thoughts of your heart, and try that they may be at all times such as are pleasing in the sight of God. Watch your words and your actions, and see that they are such as are suitable to your Christian profession—good, kind, and innocent. Watch yourselves in your dealings with the world, that you fall not into the many traps set for you by Satan.

"Stand fast in the faith." Take hold of the

*truth* as taught by God's Word, and keep it firmly, so that you may not be carried about by every wind of false doctrine. Test by the Bible what you are told, and receive only, as matters of faith, those things that are therein contained, or can be proved thereby; but all those things accept without hesitation or doubt. Thus stand firm in that holy faith to which you have been called to the comfort of your own soul, and the edification of others.

“Be manful and stout-hearted.” Never be afraid to stand up for the truth; never be afraid to confess yourself on the Lord's side; never be so foolish and cowardly as to try to make compromises with evil in order to keep in favour with men. No. Do what is right, regardless of all consequences; do what is right, though you be blamed, ridiculed, and persecuted for it; do what is right, though in so doing you stand alone, deserted and avoided by all your friends and neighbours, as a fool and fanatic. Yours is the true wisdom, if you are faithfully following and obeying the Lord Jesus. The fool is he who says, “There is no God,” or who lives as if

he believed in no God, whatever his assertions may be ; the fool is he who, professing to believe in death, judgment, and eternity, lives as if this life were all, and troubles nought about the future. Fight, then, for your own spiritual happiness ; fight for the spread of the *glorious everlasting Gospel*.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BY-WAYS DIVERGING FROM THE PATH.

“ Shall I kill myself ?  
What help in that ? I cannot kill my sin,  
If soul be soul ; nor can I kill my shame ;  
No, nor by living can I live it down.

. . . . .  
Then glancing up, beheld the holy nuns  
All round her weeping ; and her heart was loosed  
Within her, and she wept with these . . .

. . . . .  
. . . they took her to themselves, and she,  
Still hoping, fearing ‘ is it yet too late ? ’  
Dwelt with them.”

TENNYSON.

“ As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.”—Prov. xxvii. 8.

AMONGST the dangers against which the Christian must be very carefully on his guard is that of wandering away from God and Christ into the paths of sin, which lead him farther and farther from holiness, and so

endanger his precious soul. On either side of the right path—the path of holiness leading direct to heaven—are most intricate labyrinths of by-paths, in which the soul that enters them is in danger of becoming miserably lost, and of finding its way eventually to the broad road leading to eternal perdition. One object of Satan's temptations, and one of the evil tendencies of our own wayward wills, is to cause us to wander out of the right way, and to get lost in these dreadful labyrinths of sin. How often does he succeed in getting the Christian thus to stray, alas! far from safety!—never, however, as I believe, so far, in the goodness and mercy of the Divine Shepherd, as to be irreparably and eternally lost; though certainly to the injury, the misery, and the imminent danger, for the time being, of the wanderer. He tries, as we saw in our last chapter, to overpower by direct assault, and to cause sudden and momentary falls by means of deeply laid traps; he also tries to lead astray by a gradual process to deeds of doubtful good, leading on easily and naturally to that which is wrong, still tending onwards to that which is undoubtedly wicked,

and so he hopes to get the soul for his own ; and in this he is working upon a will much inclined to sin.

The text heading this chapter is suggestive of these sad spiritual wanderings, and gives us the following thoughts with respect to the condition of the erring Christian :—

1. He finds no place of rest.
2. He has no shelter, no protection, and is exposed to a multitude of unknown and unsuspected dangers.
3. There is reason to fear his losing his treasures, which are left behind apparently uncared for.
4. He runs the risk of never again finding his way back to safety.

(1.) Out of the right path, away from Jesus, the wandering Christian finds no rest, no peace. His mind is filled with doubts and apprehensions. As he presses on through many a winding path his feet sink deeper and deeper in mire and filth, lowering thunder-clouds gather overhead, the darkness increases speedily, and he knows not whither he is going. The feet that Christ has washed are getting soiled now : the robe in which Christ



has dressed him, which was so white and fair, is now getting torn and stained, and is gradually assuming the appearance of the filthy rags that clothed him formerly. Peace is now unknown, for he is walking in the ways of sin, and cannot see his Lord. Conscience is disturbed, but its whispered warnings meet with no response. His life is becoming steadily more and more like that of the world, which he professes to have given up, and from which he did separate himself. At last, if he still wanders on unchecked, despair will take possession of his heart, he will sink beneath the thought that heaven is lost to him, and become careless and indifferent as ever.

(2.) In those dark and grimy labyrinths of error he is surrounded by a multitude of dangers. On all sides glare the eyes of lurking demons, everywhere appear the threatening points of fiery darts; and the shield of faith seems to be gradually falling to pieces, the helmet of salvation in hourly danger of being cloven asunder, and "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God," has been dropped and forsaken. Oh, what a wretched

plight is his! How dreadful is his danger, how woeful are his looks!

When wandering away from Christ and holiness, the temptations and snares he meets with, many at all times, are greatly increased, and he has not that which he needs to overcome and guard against them. For his faith is sadly failing, if it does not seem to be actually gone, the Bible and prayer are neglected, and the hope of salvation seems to be almost lost. His enemies now have the upper hand. He cannot cope with them, and he knows not when they may assail him with overwhelming force. He gives way to this sin and that as the enticement offers. He seems to have given up Christ, and is pointed at by the world as an instance of the worthlessness and hollowness of the Christian profession, and the hypocrisy of the followers of Christ.

(3.) Through this melancholy desertion he is in danger of losing his heavenly treasure, — that treasure which has been accumulating for him, since he came to Jesus, in the eternal storehouses of the world to come; treasure of glory, happiness, and beauty vast and un-

conceived. Is he in danger of losing this?—this, which is worth more than all the wealth of the world multiplied a thousandfold; this, which he was to have and enjoy for ever; this, for which he has trusted, for which he has toiled, for which he has denied himself; this, which God has promised to all who accept the Lord Jesus as their eternal inheritance? He is in danger, great danger, of losing this. For it can only be obtained eventually by those who travel upon the narrow path, and abide in Christ. Christ must be the beginning, the continuation, and the end of the Christian life, and such a life leads surely to those eternal glories which are prepared from the beginning of the world for the servants and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, the true sheep of the Good Shepherd. Wandering away from Christ he is departing from this sure and certain hope, he is abandoning that which is the one sure proof that he is truly an heir of glory, and he is in danger of losing that reward which appertains to those who in this world walk with God. And if he lose that there is nothing for him but the woeful lot of the rebellious—

weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness. In these devious paths the Christian is in danger of losing that from which by anticipation he has derived all the real and solid enjoyment his life has known—that apart from which nothing can satisfy, but life must be a burden and eternity woe.

(4.) Lost in the darkness, the mire, and the winding paths of this delusive maze he cannot, by any means in his power, find his own way back to safety. If he tries to do so he only gets farther and farther away, for Satan whispers lies about the path, and points him in the wrong direction. Those paths lead on to misery and despair, and if the soul were left to itself, they would end in eternal death. The Christian soul that has wandered far in sin—and this is by no means a fancied but a real danger—when it comes to itself and perceives its folly and its error, is kept from returning to Christ by many a high-sounding but false sentiment that helps it on to that condition of despair which falling away from Christ—though in God's mercy it be but temporary—must ever gender, after a time, in a greater or less degree.

It is not, however, the Lord's will that any of His beloved people should be lost hereafter. At the last day He will be able to say to His Father, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." *Never* will He abandon any soul that has confided itself to Him. *Never* will He betray a trust, or fail to fulfil His pledged word. He will guard for ever that most precious thing which we have placed in His holy keeping, even our immortal soul. All His true people He will enable to be faithful unto death. Through Him only can they ever hope to be, and He will not withhold from them that which is necessary to enable them so to hold out. He will not withdraw from them that precious grace, and that Holy Spirit, when He has once bestowed them. He will surely complete the work He has begun. In the words of the inspired Psalmist we may sing, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of Thine own hands." In Phil. i. 6. St Paul says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work

in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

He will never allow Satan by any means, whether by direct temptations, or by traps and decoys, to wrest from His almighty hand one single Christian, even the feeblest—one single soul that has a spark of faith. This He plainly declares in words which we may joyfully and thankfully take to ourselves, treasure up in our memories, feed upon in our hearts, and draw comfort and strength from, so decided and unequivocal are they. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall *never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.* My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and *no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.* I and My Father are one." (St. John x. 27-30).

He therefore mercifully goes forth, when they wander from Him, and brings them back, sometimes chastening them that they may not wander more. In this He deals very differently with different characters and cases. One He checks at the outset, when

scarcely knowing that he has erred. He sees in His servant a disposition to stray from Him. He sees that the first steps in the wrong direction have been already taken, and He puts forth His shepherd's crook, and draws the wanderer back. Another He allows to go far enough to feel the misery of being away from Him, to learn how comfortless are the paths of sin, and to perceive that to leave by one little step the path of rectitude is to go down step by step towards the soul-destroying sinks of vice ; then in His loving mercy He sallies forth (as it were), and seeks, and brings him safely back. A third He permits to stray so far that he goes down even into the miserable depths of despair. Sin has followed sin, wrong doing has deepened into crime, the quieting of conscience with plausible excuses has been followed by the hardening of the heart, the desertion of the Bible has led to the embracing of false doctrine, and the man who was but a short time ago a devout and exemplary Christian, is now seen, by his fellow disciples with grief and horror, by the haters of Christianity with exultation and ridicule, seated beside the evil liver

and the sceptic. No fancied and impossible picture is this, startling and distressing though it be. But even from these depths Jesus can rescue : even from such a relapse He can restore. He steps forth into the dark regions of crime and infidelity, bearing with Him the lamp of life, and brings him—half stifled and begrimed with filth as he is—back to His fold, generally with much needful discipline, oftentimes through the dread valley of the shadow of death.

He uses various means thus to restore His people. Sometimes by a timely word of warning ; sometimes by the fiery trial of sickness, bereavement, and disappointment. He knows exactly what is needed, and in His goodness and mercy He will not destroy His child's soul in order to save him a little temporary distress. Nay, though He feels acutely every stroke Himself, He smites for the correction and restoration of His servant. Thus I think we may safely assert—I cannot see how we can believe it otherwise, with those texts before us quoted above, and others beside—that all who are at any time *truly* the Lord's people, *really* possessed of a *living*



faith, have *really* partaken of the new birth, if they wander, as alas ! they often do, if they wander far, as they sometimes do, will be brought back again repentant and deeply humbled, will be reinstated and sanctified, and will obtain eventually the blessedness of heaven.

Then they have again rest, comfort, and happiness. They have returned to their home in Jesus, and all is well again. And their wanderings have taught them deep, and never-to-be-forgotten lessons. They have learned that there is no peace in the ways of the wicked, that they must keep close to Jesus to be happy and safe, that they must look to Him continually for defence and guidance, must seek to be held by, and drawn ever closer to Him whom to know is life eternal. They have learned the greatness of the love of Christ, and their own weakness and insufficiency to do anything good. They are strengthened and confirmed in Him, and they press more earnestly onward to the goal, having a more single eye to the glory of God.

How then must we be on our watch against

this evil of wandering away from Christ, and returning to the world, from which we have been separated, and made the Lord's peculiar people! How often we find the Israelites straying into the ways of idolatry, and indulging in the sins of the people amongst whom they dwelt, but from whom they were commanded to remain separate! So are we, the true Israel which is of faith, in the same danger. Let us not deem it a fancied peril, for it is terribly real; but let us ever stand carefully on our guard. Let us try with all our might to keep and walk closely with the Lord Jesus, so as not to take one of those dangerous steps out of the way, which are in reality steps in the direction opposite to that in which we are called and desire to walk. Let us pray ever (for it is in prayer our strength lies, we must ever watch *unto prayer*) that the almighty arm of Jesus may be always about us, keeping us from becoming separated from Him; that His loving voice may at all times be heard behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." (Isa. xxx. 21). So may we step boldly onward, working earnestly for Him, and showing by our blameless lives

that while in the world we are not of it, being kept habitually from the evil by the holy sanctifying influence of the great Spirit dwelling within.

In proportion as we keep in the right path—the path of rectitude, honour, and purity pointed out to us by Jesus—will our lives be happy, peaceful, and successful. For real and solid is that happiness which is derived from communion with Jesus, and that communion is enjoyed by those who walk closely with Him, more or less according to the closeness of their walk; real and solid is that peace which is the result of feeling that we have an ever-present guide and comforter of infinite wisdom and love, able and willing to direct us in all difficulties, and comfort us in all sorrows, as is the case with the Spirit of Christ, who dwells within us; real, indeed, is that success in the work of life, which will be recognized by the King of kings, and commended in the words “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” and that will follow a life devoted to the service of Christ, and passed near to Him.

Shall we entertain within our minds the dreadful thought that it matters but little if the Lord's people do wander, if they are sure eventually to be brought back and saved? No, not for an instant! Such could never be the feeling of a true and sincere Christian. Wandering away from Christ must cause great grief to one who truly loves Him, for he wishes to serve Him in all things, and that continually. And what has he not lost of spiritual blessing during that erring period: what evil may he not have done to other souls? He may have put a stumbling-block in the way of some who were thinking of coming to Christ; he may have offended some weak brother—at least, he may have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. How dreadful to have been the cause of any of these evils!

Rather, if we are disposed to think slightly of such an evil—an evil that brings dishonour upon our Lord, and disgrace upon ourselves—and find ourselves wandering often and seriously without feeling grief, or striving to resist, let us doubt seriously, and question minutely whether we are upon the right path at

all, and can claim Jesus as our Master, and heaven as our home ; or whether we are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, having no part or lot with Him. Upon that subject let us seriously think, not avoiding it because disagreeable, or putting it by as unimportant. Let us make sure that we are in Christ Jesus, born again of water and the Spirit, sons of God by the adoption of grace, and so inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

If, however, these pages should, by God's blessing, meet the eye of any of the Lord's true people who have been wandering away from Him into those devious and comfortless paths of which we have been speaking, let me remind them that if they will now return to their gracious Saviour, He is ready—ah, how ready!—to receive them. Listen not to those plausible arguments which Satan ever pours into the ears of those who are wanderers wishing to return, in order to draw them farther from safety, happiness, and truth ; but come to Jesus like the returning prodigal, and like that gracious father He will joyfully receive you, will feed, clothe, and

cleanse you afresh. To each the Lord says, when He calls His people out of the world, as He did to Abram of old, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1). Walk in faith, love, and obedience; walk with, and near to Me. Follow and imitate Me. Be blameless in a world of iniquity, wise in a world of spiritual folly, loving and gentle in a world of hatred and violence.

Of this we may be sure, that when we glance back upon life's closing page from the gate of death, great will be our peace and comfort—great, too, our thankfulness—if we see that it has been passed, by the grace of God, near to Him, and can feel that we have followed Him, amidst many a fall, no doubt, but with no very serious wanderings, the falls decreasing steadily as time passed on, the love increasing, and proportionally the peace. The comfort of such a retrospect, we cannot doubt, will be greater in proportion to the length of time we have walked with Him, and the closeness of that walk. The closeness of our walk must be in proportion to the brilliance of the flame of faith that burns within, the completeness of our self-consecra-

tion to His service, and the extent to which we are influenced by the Holy Spirit.

We must, therefore, jealously guard against the least step away from Christ, the least deviation from the path of holiness and rectitude, for we know not where that step may lead, and what evil it may cause. A truly Christian life, we must ever remember, is one characterized by a steady advance in sanctification and likeness to Jesus; not, indeed, a continuous advance, but, on the whole, a sure one. Thus speaks Dean Goulburn: "As an illustration of this law in the Kingdom of Grace, consider the movement of the tide when it is coming in. It is *movement upon the whole*. The water is sure to cover that beach in two or three hours' time, and to float that stranded sea-weed; *but it is not a movement without relapses*. Each wave, I suppose, gains a little ground, but each wave falls back as soon as it has plashed upon the shore." So in the Christian life there is movement, advance on the whole, but amidst relapses proceeding from infirmity and weakness of faith.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BRIGHT ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PATH.

"There is a bright talisman which, when possessed,  
Reveals the sweet source of contentment and rest ;  
The stream will renew while it gladdens thy heart,  
And the lustre of joy to thy features impart.

"There is a blest volume—each page it unrolls  
The nature and worth of this treasure extols ;  
Oh, study that volume ! the guidance there given  
Will lead not to happiness only, but heaven."

C. ELLIOTT.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say,  
Rejoice."—PHIL. iv. 4.

THE Christian Life has, no doubt, its dark side ; and it is this dark side which catches the eye of the world at the casual, hasty view they are usually content to give it, and hence it is generally looked upon by them as more or less a life of gloom and melancholy. This, however, is a very mistaken view of Christianity. It has its bright aspect. In-



deed, its great characteristic feature is brightness, and the reason why the lives of all true Christians are not bright with inward joy is because of the incompleteness of their Christianity, not because their religion exercises a darkening influence over them. The dark side of the Christian life arises from the temptations and persecutions they have to endure, and those troubles which are common to all mankind—sickness, sorrow, and such like.

We have been considering in some degree this dark side, and we have seen the lights that shine even out of that darkness; we have now to dwell upon its bright side, and we must first observe that Christianity is in itself essentially bright, and then endeavour to discover what it is that makes it so, in order that if we are not happy Christians we may know what our religion wants, and seek by earnest prayer and anxious strivings to acquire those things that are still wanting. Its lights so predominate over its shadows, as we shall see hereafter, that the latter are almost entirely overlooked. Indeed, but for the infirmity of the people of God they

would be always so ; and thus the Christian's path through life may be called a path of brightness.

As when we pass along, on a bright sunshiny day, a path wooded on either side, overhung by the leafy branches of trees, and bordered by flowery shrubs, we feel sufficiently the warming and cheering influence of the great planet that rules the day without being dazzled by its brilliance ; and though shadows continually lie across our path, they do not obstruct in any essential degree the glorious light of day. So is the path of the faithful servant of God. The shadows that cross it continually are not such as to prevent his feeling the joy-inspiring influence of the Sun of Righteousness shining upon his soul. Indeed, but for them, we may well suppose it would have an overpowering effect : his eyes would be dazzled by the glory, and he could not read those books of instruction, as it were, which are laid before him in those changing shadows that bring momentary tears to his eyes, to be wiped away by the gentle hand of Jesus. The shadows cast by sin do obscure that light for

the time, but not those that come by the arrangement of the Good Shepherd, which alone belong to the Christian as such.

This truth St Paul suggests in the verse at the head of this chapter, and he lays upon us as a duty the cultivation of a cheerful and rejoicing spirit. This cheerfulness and rejoicing, he tells us, should be habitual: "Rejoice *always*." The source of it should be the Lord: "Rejoice in *the Lord* *always*." He emphasizes it by repetition: "Again I will say, Rejoice." He will repeat it again and again, for it is an important matter. At all times should the Christian rejoice in spirit, and strive to be cheerful also outwardly. And in this, as well as in all other efforts for good, he must seek the help of the Spirit of Christ; for in proportion as he is influenced by that Spirit will he be able to rejoice in the Lord.

We have now to speak of those paradoxes of the Christian life which are so incomprehensible, and so incredible to all excepting those who verify them in their own personal experience. The Christian is to rejoice, come what may.

1. He is to rejoice in temptation. He is

not to rejoice on account of temptation, or desire and run in the way of it. On the contrary, he is to seek, if possible,—if he can do so without shrinking from duty—to avoid it. When, however, it comes upon him unbidden, unsought, and unavoidably, he is to rejoice notwithstanding, and amidst it. The assaults of spiritual foes on every side, and the other efforts of evil against his soul, need not destroy the happiness of his spirit. The 27th Psalm suggests the feelings he will have under it —

“The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom  
shall I fear ?

The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall  
I be afraid ?

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes,  
Came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled  
and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me, my  
heart shall not fear :

Though war should rise against me, in this will I be  
confident.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I  
seek after ;

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the  
days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in  
his temple.

For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion :

In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ;  
He shall set me up upon a rock.

And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me :

Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy ;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

—(Vers. 1-6.)

Thus may the Christian rejoice in the Lord when assailed by spiritual foes, being confident that final victory, notwithstanding many reverses, will be given him. Foreseeing the triumph that shall by God's grace be his, he has beforehand those feelings of exultation which will fill his heart when the deliverance is effected. If he had only his own strength to trust in he could not do so, but relying simply and entirely upon the Lord, he can, and does. In the midst of temptation, if his faith keeps firm, he *rejoices in the Lord*.

2. He is to rejoice, too, in persecution, if it be God's will that that should fall to his lot. At the time at which the Apostle wrote it was, I suppose, impossible for any branch of the Christian Church, or any conspicuous member thereof, wholly to escape persecu-

tion; and therefore in the exhortation, "Rejoice always," doing so under persecution must be included. This, we find, has been the usual state of the Christian mind amidst it from the times of the apostles to the present. One or two instances will be sufficient.

In Acts v. the Apostles are brought up before the Sanhedrim, and would have been killed by them had not Gamaliel prevented that deed of bloodshed. He commands, instead, to "put the apostles forth for a little season." They are therefore only beaten, and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus. And we are told, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." And in our own church those who endured torture, and died at the stake for the pure gospel of Christ, endured and died, for the most part, in peace and even joy of spirit. The noble fathers of the glorious reformation of the English Church are, indeed, abiding monuments of the power of the grace of God to sustain His people to the end, to carry them through agony the

most intense, and enable them to face death in a form from which the flesh shrinks with horror. Though Cranmer's peace was destroyed, at least for the time, by his weakly yielding to his enemies' cunning persuasions, and sinfully signing those miserable recantations, Ridley and Latimer were kept firm and in peace through all, even to the end. When bound by their inhuman persecutors to the stake, as the fire is kindling around them, they speak cheerful words to one another, and then calmly, trustfully, joyfully commit their souls, like the first Christian martyr, St Stephen, long before, into the hands of the Lord. The holy and aged Latimer cries with prophetic voice to his fellow-sufferer, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. WE SHALL THIS DAY LIGHT SUCH A CANDLE, BY GOD'S GRACE, IN ENGLAND, AS I TRUST SHALL NEVER BE PUT OUT." Upon this most memorable saying we may just remark, by the way, that over three hundred years have passed away since the calm voice of the dying Latimer gave expression to it, and still the candle of pure and reformed religion that day lighted burns brightly and

steadily in our midst, and, as we hope, believe, and pray, will burn until the coming of the Lord, when all His whole Church will be gathered to Him, and dwell and reign with Him in peace, happiness, and glory. So—to return—in the midst of the fiery trial of persecution does the Lord keep His people's minds in peace, enabling them to esteem it a high privilege to be called upon to endure for Him, and to rejoice amidst, and on account of, their sufferings. The Christian martyr feels and knows that he is suffering for One who for him endured far greater agonies, and no amount of bodily pain could give him half the anguish which the denial of his Lord would inevitably cause him.

3. The Christian is, further, to rejoice in sickness. Through weary days and sleepless nights, amidst weakness and pain, the burnings of fever, the gnawings of consumption, the helplessness of paralysis, the feebleness of heart-disease, he is to be calm, cheerful, and even happy. The peace of God is to reign within him. And how beautiful and sublimely sweet is that peace and brightness of which the bed of pain and sickness is often-



times the scene! The Christian, supported by Jesus, and comforted by His continual presence, can endure years of ever-increasing pain without a murmuring word passing the pallid lips, or a look of peevish discontent resting on the emaciated face. All is patience, resignation, and comfort, and there are Christian peace and joy seen in their most beautiful and attractive guise. Canon Miller tells us that the three happiest men and women he has ever seen were three bedridden Christians—two of them in poverty (*Letters to a Young Gentleman*). Yes, in the darkened chamber there is often brightness; for though the light of the sun is excluded, the light of heaven is not: it shines through the afflicted sufferer. That is a light of intensest beauty perceptible to all about him. Instead of needing to be cheered by others, he sheds oftentimes brightness upon them. His words are probably very few, and are spoken with a painful effort; but still the influence of a calm, cheerful, heaven-directed spirit is felt by all who approach, and the patient face speaks volumes. The servants of Christ are enabled to rejoice in the Lord in sickness, in the midst

of pain. And this is one of the great proofs of the reality, the heavenly nature, and the Divine origin of Christianity, that it will stand the test of every kind of trial. Mere amiability of temper, a stalwart contempt of suffering, or a dead faith, will collapse when severely tried. Not so, however, a true and living faith; not so the grace of Christ. Trial has the effect of increasing and strengthening these, and is generally designed for that express purpose. And God ever gives His people strength according to their day. For the trials of every hour He gives them the requisite powers of endurance if they continually seek the blessing in earnest, faithful prayer.

4. There is still another condition of suffering to which the Christian man, in common with all the rest of the world, is subject, in which rejoicing would seem to be an utter impossibility. If, however, he is to rejoice *always*, he must rejoice also in the midst of human sorrow. How can this be? it is surely a positive contradiction. But the human character and human feelings are made up, apparently to a very great extent, of contradictions. We need not look far to discover

this. The person of each individual will furnish a case in point. We need not then, and we will not, put this subject aside as out of the question, because it appears to be essentially a contradiction. No, the apostle says that the Christian should "*rejoice in the Lord always,*" and therefore we need not fear that in discussing the subject we are necessarily encroaching upon the region of the impossible, or fanciful.

It does not mean, surely, that they are not to feel sorrow? Certainly not. They often feel it more than other people, though they do not show it as much. They feel more keenly and deeply, though they do not give way to those passionate expressions of it in which others seek relief. They have another vent unknown to the worldling, and so are able to keep their distress to a great extent out of sight, without its having that hardening effect upon them which the crushing down of sorrow by an effort of the will often produces. The secret of it is that they are enabled to bow in humble resignation to the will of the Lord, knowing that He does all things well, and they have a heavenly vent for their feelings, and

heavenly balm is applied to the wound. They pour their troubles into the ever-attentive ear of a loving and gracious Master, a sympathizing elder Brother, and He speaks to them the gracious word of healing. Yes, strange as it may seem—incomprehensible, impossible—even while the heart is pained, and tears of sorrow gather in the eyes, whether for bereavement, or disappointment, or whatever the trouble may be, the Christian is enabled to rejoice *in spirit*.

In speaking thus of rejoicing at all times in the Lord, even in the midst of affliction of every kind, I do not overlook our human weaknesses, nor do I over-estimate the power of the grace of Christ. I have not drawn an ideal picture of Christian joy, though I have taken, and am justified in doing so, a high standard of Christian attainment for our example and our aim. The spiritual state of which I have spoken—that of being able to rejoice in the Lord when every outward circumstance is adverse to it—is to be our aim ; and we are all, whatever our character, whatever our disposition, whatever our circumstances, capable *by the grace of God* of attaining it.

And trial, when it is met in a patient and rejoicing spirit, has the effect of building us up in the faith, as St James tells us in the first chapter of his epistle: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Not only then are we to be cheerful and rejoicing when everything seems to be going well—there is no virtue in that; but also when naturally we are inclined to cry in bitterness of spirit with the patriarch of old, "All these things are against me." They proved not to be so in his case, and in ours also we shall find that all things are in reality working for our good; and we should assuredly see it so if we could look far on into the future. It is realising and feeling confident that everything is in the hand of a loving God that enables the Christian to be cheerful at all times—that is, at all times when he is able to feel himself near to Jesus.

The degree and the continuance of this rejoicing are proportional to the extent of our

reliance upon God, and the depth of our spiritual life. With those who have made great strides in holiness, who are possessed of strong deep-seated faith, upon whom much grace has been bestowed, and who are greatly influenced by the Holy Spirit, this rejoicing is greater, more general, and more visible than with those who are not gifted to the same extent with spiritual endowments. In those whose Christianity is not perhaps more real, but more effectually fills the heart and influences the whole being, is this brightness more habitually found, and hence we must conclude that there is in the religion of Christ that which is essentially bright. Those therefore who represent it as a religion of gloom grossly slander it, and show that they have never looked beyond the surface, and that they know little or nothing of it experimentally. Those also who in their lives display it as such, have greatly mistaken the spirit they are called upon to cultivate — not that of asceticism, but brightness and cheerfulness. Many a true believer goes mourning all his days, when he is called to rejoicing ; but such a condition is a sign of backwardness, feeble-

ness of faith, and inability to grasp with any degree of firmness the blessed things that Jesus offers.

Thus then the path to glory, though a difficult one and full of temptations, and though the Christian has to bear, in addition to these temptations and these peculiar difficulties, the same trials as other people, is nevertheless bright with heavenly light. The shadows that lie across it, unless they are blackened by stains of wilful sin, bring but a temporary sadness to the heart, and, by means of them, deep and important lessons are often taught. So that for those very shadows, those blessed afflictions, we have to lift up our hearts in thankfulness; "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, and v. i.).

If we were to question the old man, who has life with all its vicissitudes behind, and nothing but the grave, as far as this world is concerned, before him, and has lived throughout a stranger to Christ, and were to ask him whether he had succeeded in making happiness his own, or even contentment, I think he would give us—let him be whom he may—a very unsatisfactory answer. I think, if he spoke the truth, he would almost certainly answer us, without hesitation, in the negative. Let him be the best specimen of the worldling we can find, a man who has been throughout a long life eminently successful in all his undertakings, has been blessed with an unusual degree of health and strength, has been possessed of all the necessities and comforts of life, and has lived a moral, sober, and outwardly religious life. Let him be all this, and, further, let him be one who has lived an active, diligent, and useful life, yet as he looks back upon the part he has played upon the stage of the world before he makes his exit, he will readily admit that he has missed the point in his piece which alone could make his playing satisfactory. He has ever been aim-



ing at happiness, but has ever missed it. Something has always come in the way to mar it, when it seemed to be just acquired.

Happiness, then, can only be found in true Christianity. The light of real joy shines upon the path of the justified man, but there it is found alone. So that if we desire it—and there is not, I suppose, a single man or woman in the world that does not—we must enter and travel upon that path.

If we do so, happiness may be ours while we continue here, if we look for it in the right direction, try to draw it from the right source, and seek it in the right way. Christians are prone to seek it in the same things from which the worldling tries to extract it, the things of this poor world ; and then he also is disappointed until he learns his error, and seeks it aright in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to find his joy and happiness in spite of all the obstacles the world and the flesh offer. He is to rejoice notwithstanding all the thorns that ruin the worldling's peace, the troubles and trials of life. He must therefore seek it in quite another direction. He must rejoice *in the Lord*. His joy must come direct from

heaven, the light upon his path is a heavenly light; a light not obscured by the clouds, a joy not diminished by the thorns of earth and clay.

Another reason why the Christian often does not thus rejoice is, that he carries with him, as it were, instruments of self-torture, and applies them as he journeys on. On entering the strait gate, and stepping upon the narrow, upward path, he does not fling away all those doubts and apprehensions, those suspicions of revealed truth, that dissatisfaction in the decision upon doctrines and ceremonies at which the Church has arrived through long centuries of thought, those uncertainties and perplexities with which Satan troubled him before; and hence he is sad and fearful when he ought to be rejoicing and confident—rejoicing and confident in the Lord.

Travelling, then, upon this shining path, we are not wilfully to do away the brightness of it, or to turn away our eyes from it, but we are to enjoy it as much as possible. Being Christians not in name only, but in deed and in truth, we are to cultivate a

cheerful and rejoicing spirit. To this end we must strive to go on our way content with such things as we have, thanking God for the many good things He gives us, especially that precious Word of Truth which we read now, no man forbidding us, and that noble Church of ours which so honours that Word, and gives us such beautiful formularies for the celebration of Divine worship, and so plainly declares her views and teaching in her Articles and Homilies.

So with faith firm and mind at ease, taking in simplicity of heart the truths that we read in the Bible, using without misgiving the simple and beautiful Liturgy of our Church, attending carefully to all the ordinances of religion, public and private, that lie within our reach, doing our duty faithfully both to God and man, and doing all the good we can in our day and generation, let us strive to act upon the Apostle's exhortation, and pray continually for grace to do so: "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS: AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONSTANT PRESENCE OF JESUS HERE.

“ And fast beside the olive-bordered way  
Stands the blest home where Jesus deigned to stay,  
The peaceful home, to Zeal sincere  
And heavenly Contemplation dear,  
Where Martha loved to wait with reverence meet,  
And wiser Mary lingered at Thy sacred feet.”

KEBLE.

“ In Thy presence is fulness of joy ; at Thy right hand  
there are pleasures for evermore.”—PS. xvi. 11.

“ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the  
world.”—ST MATT. xxviii. 20.

IN God alone man can find satisfying pleasures. This is a verified fact, and this is what we should conceive, considering it merely as a reasonable probability, would be the case. When a man can find out God in such a way as to have Him spiritually present with him at all times, and to feel that presence, then he can, and not till then, experience real, deep, and unalloyed happiness. Then his soul being at peace and full of joy, he

can find pleasure in everything about him, even in things which of themselves could never give it in any true degree. The beasts that perish, which have no spiritual being, are quite content and happy, and enjoy life thoroughly, if they have food and freedom, and are without physical pain. It is not so, however, with man. He may have everything calculated to make life enjoyable as far as his temporal condition is concerned, and yet be more miserable than the half-starved workhouse pauper. He has two natures, and in order to be thoroughly happy the cravings of both these natures must be satisfied, or at least those which belong to the deeper part, those of the inner spiritual man. That cannot be till he has God as a reconciled Father beside him, in that mysterious way in which He deigns to walk with those who have made agreement with Him. Then when God is thus manifested to his soul, and he finds Him an ever-present help, a kind and loving Father, a gracious and sympathizing Master, a mighty sanctifying Spirit, a God of unlimited bounty, he has perfect peace and fullness of joy.

David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, had discovered and experienced this. He knew what the presence of God was, as far as an Old Testament saint could know it, and he testifies to the fact that he has found it to be "fulness of joy," and that he knows that in His right hand are endless blessings of every kind, which He will bestow with all freedom upon those who are true and faithful servants of His—those with whom He vouchsafes to dwell, and to whom He has manifested Himself as a God of love and power.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God to man. He is "God manifest in the flesh," and so God is placed before us in such a way that we can in some degree study His character, and understand what are His eternal plans with respect to the human race. It is *only in Christ* that man can know God as a personal friend, a reconciled Father. Without Him He is a God afar off; without Him He is a consuming fire. But in Him He is brought near; in Him He is beautiful to look upon, inspiring love; in Him His presence gives "fulness of joy;" in Him He bestows by His right hand infinite and

countless blessings. In St John xiv. 7, 10, Jesus says to His disciples, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also : and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. . . . I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." Christ is one with the Father. If we would know God, we must do so by knowing Christ. If we would have God with us, dwelling with us, and giving us "fulness of joy," and bestowing upon us endless blessings, then we must open the door of our hearts in answer to the oft-repeated knock of Jesus, and admit Him, that He may, according to His promise, come in to us, and sup with us, and we with Him.

It is in Jesus only, as the manifestation of the invisible God, that man can find those real and solid pleasures his soul is ever longing for. Till he finds them in Him he is not satisfied, whatever else he may be possessed of; but when he has found those solid spiritual pleasures that dwell in Him, then he holds the things of this world of very little comparative value, so that though his circumstances here may be adverse to happiness, they have not the usual effect of making him

miserable. The deeper part of his being, his real self, is satisfied, peaceful, joyful; his more superficial longings are not considered, his bodily and mental sufferings being greatly swallowed up in his spiritual joys.

In order, then, that man may have true happiness Jesus must enter his heart, and dwell therein by the Holy Spirit so as to be continually with Him; and he must feel and realize His holy and sanctifying presence. He is longing thus to enter the heart of every man, and is continually standing without those hearts that are closed against Him, knocking, and begging to be admitted. In order to have His blessed presence we have but to open the door, to resist no longer the strivings of His gracious Spirit, and yield ourselves without misgiving into His hands. This, no doubt, can only be done by His grace, so hardened are our hearts against all that is holy and good. But still it must be done, and He gives His grace to all in whom He discerns the least longing after Him. We must by faith receive the blessed Saviour, accept His glorious sacrifice, come as humble penitents to His throne of grace, and we



shall have His presence with us, and those joys and blessings which His presence brings.

In St Matt. xxviii. 20 we have the Master's parting promise that this shall be the case. "Lo," says He, "I am with you *all the days* even unto the end of the world." He would be continually with His Church as a whole, and also with each individual member of it. He would be with every one who would close with His offers, accept His great salvation, and receive that purity and reconciliation necessary before he could walk with a holy God, and enjoy the Divine presence. This promise referred, not merely to those then living, but to every *one* of His people to the end of this dispensation. By His Holy Spirit He is with, and dwells in, every one of us who are washed in His precious blood, and clothed in His spotless robe of righteousness.

This presence brightens the Christian's life. Having Him he has what he must ever feel he sorely needs amidst all the difficulties, sorrows, perplexities, and temptations of this life.

In Him he has continually a kind friend and counsellor, One who will lend a patient ear to all his difficulties, and will always help him—nay, *lift* him out of them if need be. In all those difficulties which beset every single person, not merely of the spiritual world, but relating to this life too, when standing as it were between two paths, and he knows not which way to go, which path will lead him right, he may refer with confidence to this infallible adviser, and then acting upon His directions all will turn out satisfactorily. Again when, as he sometimes will, he has foolishly stepped onward trusting to his own wisdom, and has taken the wrong path and finds himself in a confused maze of difficulties, which he might have avoided had he sought guidance earlier, that kind friend and gracious Lord takes him by the hand and leads him into plain paths. Thus the presence of Jesus relieves him greatly of care.

In Jesus he has also a sympathizing High Priest. "For we," says St Paul, "have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all

points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). To Him he may take, on Him he may lay, all his sorrows, whether they be temptations (in the usual received sense) or trials (afflictions physical and mental). In all these He can feel for him as One who has suffered in like manner; One who has borne the cross, and gained the crown of great reward by His own personal and individual merit. And so, feeling for him, He comforts his heart and heals his wounds, and the Christian is relieved in sorrow.

In Him he has, further, a Teacher of infinite wisdom. He has many things to learn, but if he enters with becoming humility the school of Christ he will learn those things, line by line, lesson by lesson. He teaches him great and wondrous truths, which from another he could never learn; truths of the present, and the future; truths relating to his own soul; truths of the Master's fathomless love; truths respecting the world at large. Did he listen to the theories, the explanations, the doubtful comments of the merely worldly wise, how far in the paths of ignorance, as regards the true wisdom, would he

go! because God "has hid these things from the wise and prudent," that is, those who are wise without heavenly wisdom. Being, however, thus taught directly by the Spirit of Christ, he is delivered from the dangers of religious ignorance.

He has, moreover, a blessed sanctifier. His daily sins are daily washed away, upon his humble confession of them to his God in the secrecy of his private chamber, in the stream of blood flowing from the side riven on Calvary, and increased strength and grace are daily given for the time to come. And so by the mighty inward operation of the Spirit, advancing steadily in holiness, he is freed from the misery of a conscience stained with wilful habitual sin.

So by the presence of Jesus, brought to him by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Christian has that which can free him from those many sources of misery from which the worldling can find no escape, and which must destroy all happiness. Happiness and enjoyment cannot exist in the midst of difficulties apparently insurmountable and inextricable; they cannot exist when a man is

distracted with sorrow and pain, and overwhelmed with the thought of temptations yielded to without a struggle; they cannot be his who, knowing that his soul is immortal, is in ignorance as to its eternal fate, whilst he feels that it may be at any moment launched into the unknown future; they cannot be his whose conscience is "seared with a hot iron," who is living in wilful sin, and yielding to every kind of passion. But the Christian, being freed from these sources of discomfort by laying everything upon his Lord, can rejoice habitually in spirit, and so heavenly light shines upon his path. This light shines more brightly the more he is enabled to realize the Divine presence, the more the Holy Spirit influences his heart and his life.

This, then, is the secret of that rejoicing we were considering in our last chapter—rejoicing always in the Lord. It is thus the Christian may have continual cheerfulness. We there saw that Christianity has in it that which is essentially bright, and we have now found out what is the chief thing that makes it so—the continual presence of Jesus, the Son of God, by the Holy Ghost. And this cheerful-

ness exists, as we saw, not only when all goes well, but when everything seems to be adverse to it. Indeed, it often appears to thrive most when circumstances are against it. It can bear up amidst temptations and afflictions of various kinds, as has been again and again undoubtedly proved. We who are Christians are to cultivate a happy spirit by giving ourselves up more unreservedly, body, soul, and spirit, to the Saviour, and as we do so shall we realize more vividly His continual presence; by holding close and blessed communion with Him, and therein telling Him all our difficulties, perplexities, sorrows, and shortcomings, and receiving in return that guidance, comfort, pardon, grace, He is so ready to bestow; and by striving in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Him, to glorify His holy name. The result of such a course will surely be increase of happiness and peace, and every good thing.

Especially we are promised the presence of Jesus when we assemble together for social worship: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). Of these gather-

ings especially we enjoy it when we partake of the Holy Communion of His body and blood. We must go to His house expecting to meet Him, and expecting to receive a special blessing from Him. We must go seeking comfort, help, and instruction ; seeking to be cheered and strengthened. If we truly go in this spirit with humble faith and hope, we shall not be disappointed, our services will not be fruitless. The house of God will not be a weariness then, but a source of great delight, because we are come to meet, and to worship with prayer and praise, the Lord Jesus Christ—Him whom our soul loves more than all ; and if we go sad and cast down, it will set us up once more. It ought to be a delight to all to go to His house of prayer, as often as opportunity offers, not only on the Sunday, but also in the week, so that it interferes not with the daily duties. It will cheer and support the spirit amidst all the troubles, trials, and anxieties of life, and will bring down many blessings upon ourselves and others.

One thought then upon which our minds may dwell in connection with this subject is,

that as we journey along the path to heaven—a path, as we have seen, rough, toiling, and painful in many respects, full of dangers, snares, and temptations, beset with a multitude of foes, and with dangerous by-ways opening out of it—as we travel onward, the light of the smile of the great Jehovah rests upon us, giving us unspeakable happiness and peace, and Jesus walks beside us, leading us by the hand, giving us perfect confidence. At times the mists will rise around—mists gendered by Satan, by our own follies, by our weaknesses; these obscure in some degree that glorious light, and hide from our view our guiding, protecting Saviour. At times, too, we wilfully wander away from Him, and get ourselves lost in sin, and have to be sought, and brought back like wayward children. What we want is—and surely we all may have it—to perceive that light ever upon us giving us joy, and to feel that Saviour ever by giving us confidence and peace. This will be in proportion as we yield ourselves more entirely to Him, to be led and dealt with according to His infinite wisdom, and to be devoted to His service. Then shall we



feel, indeed, that God is smiling upon us ; then shall we find that Jesus is keeping us close, and guiding us right ; then shall we see and often commune with Him.

This is the way to "rejoice in the Lord alway." To have and to feel the continual presence of Jesus ; through Him to see God as a reconciled Father, to look forward with full assurance of faith to the glorious home He is preparing for us, and under His direction and by His blessing to work heartily and successfully, "in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call" us from time to time.

Knowing, then, that there is in His presence fulness of joy, and that there are in His Almighty hand endless blessings, let us lay firm hold of this precious promise, "*Lo, I am with you alway.*" Let us make it a matter of earnest prayer as we bow at the throne of grace, that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, may influence us more completely, that we may feel and rejoice in His continual presence, and so may be blessed abundantly and made a blessing. And let us not be satisfied until we experi-

ence that peace, that rejoicing in the Lord, which the realization of His presence gives—nor then, but ever be reaching on, ever be marching forward, till heaven is reached, and joy completed, and Jesus seen face to face.

But while we look upon this as a precious promise, and may plead it as such at the throne of grace, and pray that we may realize that holy presence more to the joy and comfort of our souls, we must observe that it is in reality an assertion. “*I am* with you *always*.” Not, “*I will* be with you, if you continually ask My presence;” not, “*I will* be with you, when you are in a heavenly frame of mind, and fit to hold communion with Me;” but, “*I am* with you.” You, My beloved disciples, are the representatives and the germ of that great and mighty Church which shall hereafter stretch out her far-reaching arms, to embrace and overshadow every nation and country in every part of the habitable globe. With you, that is, with My universal Church in all ages; with you, that is, with every individual member of that great Catholic Church, *I am always*, whether at the moment you realize it or not. And at those times

when you feel in yourselves most weak, will you experience especially my cheering, strengthening, and supporting presence, so that often when you seem least fit for it will you, to your own astonishment, be capable of the greatest things. In the midst of the deepest sorrows, beneath the darkest shadows of earth, will you often have, to the surprise of those who observe you, the brightest glimpses of the heavenly light that cheers your path, as the great Apostle Paul testifies, "When I am weak then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us" (2 Cor. vii. 5, 6).

I will close this chapter with the beautiful words with which Canon Farrar concludes his "Life of Christ," having reference to this blessed subject of the continual presence of Jesus with His faithful people.

"Between us and His visible presence—between us and that glorified Redeemer who now sitteth at the right hand of God—that cloud still rolls. But the eye of Faith can pierce it; the incense of true prayer can rise

above it ; through it the dew of blessing can descend. And if He is gone away, yet He has given us in His Holy Spirit a nearer sense of His presence, a closer infolding in the arms of His tenderness, than we could have enjoyed even if we had lived with Him of old in the home of Nazareth, or sailed with Him in the little boat over the crystal waters of Gennesareth. We may be as near to Him at all times—and more than all when we kneel down to pray—as the beloved disciple was when he laid his head upon His breast. The word of God is very nigh us, even in our mouths and in our hearts. To ears that have been closed, His voice may seem indeed to sound no longer. The loud noises of War may shake the world ; the eager calls of Avarice and of Pleasure may drown the gentle utterance which bids us ‘Follow Me ;’ after two thousand years of Christianity the incredulous murmurs of an impatient scepticism may make it scarcely possible for Faith to repeat, without insult, the creed which has been the regeneration of the world. Ay, and sadder even than this, every now and then may be heard, even in Christian England,

the insolence of some blaspheming tongue which still scoffs at the Son of God as He lies in the agony of the garden, or breathes His last sigh upon the bitter tree. But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. To all who will listen He still speaks. He promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world, and we have not found His promise fail. It was but for thirty-three short years of a short lifetime that He lived on earth; it was but for three broken and troubled years that He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom; but for ever, even until all the *Æons* have been closed, and the earth itself, with the heavens that now are, have passed away, shall every one of His true and faithful children find peace and hope and forgiveness in His name, and that name shall be called Emmanuel, which is being interpreted—

‘GOD WITH US.’”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

" I am going a long way

\* \* \* \*

To the island-valley of Avilion ;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies  
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns  
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

TENNYSON.

" Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 Peter i. 8, 9.

THE anticipation of a pleasure is generally no small part of its enjoyment, and not unfrequently the main part—perhaps even the whole—rests in the looking forward to it, and then the bright anticipation leads to disap-

pointment in the reality. But supposing, as may often be, the reality far outshines the brilliant forecast, still the degree of enjoyment derived from any pleasure is greatly augmented by the previous longing expectations we entertained regarding it. In the case of heaven we know that the reality will far, far surpass the foretaste which the happiest Christian has of it on earth. In that case, however, the delightful foretaste does not consist in mere expectation, but, as St Peter tells in the above-quoted passage, it is the actual reception, though in a limited degree, of that which is "the end of our faith."

"The end of our faith" is the object, or result, of our trust in Christ. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; we trust Him simply and entirely, knowing all that He has done for us; we take Him at His word, knowing that He cannot lie or deceive, and remembering all the gracious and blessed promises He has made us, and the object, the end of this trust, is the salvation of our souls.

This means, as we all well know, in the first place, deliverance from death. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die,"

are our Lord's own words. It means deliverance from eternal spiritual death, which is the only kind of death recognised by Him who came to bring "life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). To the Christian who has sure and certain hope beyond the grave, the temporal death of the body is merely falling asleep in Jesus, parting with the polluted body of sin, that by the process of corruption it may be freed from all impurity, and raised up again a glorified body, never more to know or to minister to sin. The salvation of the soul is deliverance from that second death, against which the Bible, in God's great mercy, warns us so earnestly and repeatedly. Respecting this death the Word of God speaks with such great solemnity that we cannot doubt the awful nature of it, though we know, from the great goodness and compassion of God revealed to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that it will not be one whit more dreadful than His justice demands, or than He is obliged—be it said with all reverence and humility—to condemn those to who have dared persistently "to tread under foot the Son of God, and have counted



the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. x. 29), and all who, *having the Gospel plainly declared to them*, reject the Saviour, are guilty of this; and to those who do so to the end of their lives the Bible offers *no hope* beyond the grave, their destiny being "outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," and their fate, being irrevocably sealed by a great judgment which God's Word more than implies, will be final. St Paul says, "We all must be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in *the body*, according to that He hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10).

The end of the Christian's faith, then, is deliverance from the *dreadful* second death, whatever it may be. But it is not only that. It is also the reception of unutterable blessedness and glory. It is not only freedom from wretchedness and woe: it is also admittance into a glorified state of unspeakable joy. All this is included in the term salvation. Being rescued from the

dreadful fate that awaits the wicked, the man of faith, the true Christian, is at the same time brought into a condition of peace and happiness.

This salvation we very frequently hear spoken of, and speak of ourselves, as a future thing. Indeed, the usual way of referring to it is as a thing to be realised in the future, rather than as being actually experienced at present. This, however, is quite an erroneous idea. With the true Christian salvation in all its parts, though not in all its fulness, is a present thing. As soon as we are enabled by faith to grasp the Saviour, and make Him our own, we pass at once into a state of salvation. Conversion is passing from death unto life. All that is necessary to be done for our salvation has been done long ago by the Lord Jesus, and that *completed* salvation we have now to accept, each one for himself. Having accepted it, it *is* ours whilst here. We *are now* delivered from all condemnation, and therefore from all participation in the second death. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life" (St John iii. 36).

To every man of faith, death, as regards

the body, is, as has been already remarked, the falling asleep in Jesus. As we look upon the lifeless remains of a Christian, we may say, as our Lord said with reference to the little daughter of Jairus, "Not dead, but sleepeth." That departed one has eternal life, and the poor decaying body, which has borne so much, now lies in a quiet slumber awaiting the day in which it shall be roused by the trumpet of the archangelic herald of the coming King. Then body and soul will be again united, both partaking of that unending life which the soul has in possession even now. And in this knowledge of having *in present possession* eternal life—life in Jesus Christ, which can defy all the efforts of Satan and his hosts to extinguish it—there is, and must be peace. All, doubtless, do not realize it as they should, and then they have not that peace which God intends His people to have. But surely if we believe in the all-sufficiency and completeness of the atonement wrought by Christ, and have been repentant to the throne of grace and confessed our sins, pleading and relying simply upon that atonement, it is doubting the promises of God, and therefore dis-

-

honouring Him, not to feel perfectly satisfied that we are indeed saved souls, so that, come life or come death, through Christ all is well.

Then, too, believing in Jesus, we have that other part of salvation, unspeakable joy. Some, indeed, do not seem to have it, and yet surely they must in some degree, for it is a part of that salvation of which they are possessed. "Believing," says St Peter, "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified." It is unspeakable inasmuch as its nature is such that it cannot be understood or explained : it can only be experienced. It is spiritual in its being, but it exercises an influence over the mental and bodily feelings. When all goes well, and outward circumstances conduce to happiness, it exists deep down in the soul, but is little thought about, the whole man rejoicing. But when there is trouble outwardly, when the mind or the body is undergoing affliction, then by contrast this wondrous inward joy begins to show itself, both to the individual himself, and to those about him ; and it exercises a soothing and cheering influence over him, so that he is not crushed and over-

whelmed by his afflictions. While the man of the world in affliction is miserable through and through, the Christian is buoyed up by the unspeakable joy of spirit which became his own when he received the Saviour, and is an essential part of the salvation which that Saviour purchased for him.

It is unspeakable, moreover, because when experienced in its *fulness* it is so great that it cannot be expressed. It cannot be experienced in its fulness on this side the grave, even by the holiest of men; but its *nature* is still the same as that which will be ours when we reach the glorified state. It differs only in degree. It is "glorified joy," though gladdening the heart whilst militant here on earth.

Thus is the Christian life brightened with the foretaste of heaven, the nature of that foretaste being not merely the expectation, the looking forward to the safety and joy of that happy place, but the actual present reception of eternal spiritual life and joy; the present reception of that which, when perfected, will constitute heaven.

This heavenly joy within us is propor-

tionate to the love we bear to Jesus Christ. That love advances continually. It is ever growing in the true believer, saving that the advance is of a fluctuating nature. Sanctification is increase in love to Jesus, and growth in those heavenly graces that accompany that love. And as we progress in sanctification, as we advance on the heavenward road, as we press onward with eager step holding the hand of Jesus, the heavenly joy and peace increase, though frequently at the same time bodily or mental sufferings increase also. These do not deaden or diminish that joy, as a rule; but rather, as we have seen, bring it out into prominence and activity, and increase it by increasing our faith.

This joy is proportionate to our love for that Saviour whom we have never seen, but in whom we believe, and by whom, thus believing in Him, we are abundantly blessed. Never have our eyes been permitted to rest upon that blessed Saviour, as did the eyes of the apostles of old, even of St Paul, though constituted such some time after the ascension. Long, long ago He went up into the

highest heaven, and took His honoured place at the right hand of the Father's throne, there to await the time when His enemies shall be made His footstool. And dwelling thus far above our ken, He has long since ceased to manifest Himself in bodily presence to the denizens of earth. And yet we believe in Him as firmly as if we had seen Him. So amply is His personality attested by eye-witnesses of undoubted credibility that we cannot reasonably question it. With the eyes and ears of apostles and evangelists we see His holy person, and hear His words of love and wisdom, and witness His dying agonies. Through the terrified watch we behold Him rising in majesty from the grave the third day. Then we see Him again a real living person with the eyes of various disciples, and with the finger of doubting Thomas we touch His wounds, and prove unquestionably His identity.

It is not, however, upon the testimony of the apostles and other eye-witnesses only that we rely: we have personal proof that He ever liveth an interceding and sympathizing High Priest. He has manifested

Himself to our hearts in such a manner as to awaken therein deep and undying love—love which outlives all the vicissitudes of time, and is perfected in the future world, where we shall see Him face to face. And here, speaking of believing without having seen, we cannot but remember the Master's words to St Thomas by way of rebuking his doubting spirit: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed" (St John xx. 29). And thus believing in Him, we entrust without misgiving our precious souls to Him. We have given them by His invitation, encouraged by His promises, into His hands to be kept for ever. All through this life of temptation and trial, and all through the eternity of holiness and happiness following it, He will guard and never desert our immortal souls. "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6).

The whole passage from which the verse is taken which introduces the subject, and forms the groundwork of the present chapter, is a



beautiful one, expressive of thankful joy on account of all the privileges and hopes of which the Christian becomes by faith the partaker. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

The Christian's cheerfulness of spirit, which gives him calmness under provocation, com-

fort in the midst of sorrow, support in pain and weakness, is then the tasting beforehand of the joy and peace of heaven. And when we consider what Christianity gives him, we can readily see that he has in some degree those things which must be the chief sources of delight when we reach the glorified state, the haven of rest, the land of eternal bliss; when our travelling days are done, and we arrive safely at our home of many mansions, the Father's house, the Bridegroom's dwelling.

1. First, we are delivered from all condemnation, and fear not the second death, terrible and appalling as it is, for it can have no power over any who are in Christ Jesus. No dreadful doom is hanging over our heads, no gaping bottomless pit opens its awful mouth beneath our feet, no demon claims us as his property, his thralls. Christ has died, and saved, and delivered us. We are safe for ever, because we are established upon the rock that can never be moved, and are under the protection of the Good Shepherd, surrounded by His arm, kept by His power and love, justified by faith in His atonement.

2. We are also delivered from the power and dominion of sin. We *are* greatly troubled by it, and often, alas ! yield to its enticements ; but it does not reign within. We acknowledge not—nay, we dispute its authority over us. It is an insidious reptile creeping into our hearts unawares, and inflicting dreadful poisoned wounds which the blood of Christ must cure. We bruise his head and drive him off, but too often not till after the evil has been done. The days of our infatuation, when we embraced the slimy death-bringing thing, are gone, and now it is plainly seen to be a hideous and deadly monster, from which we shrink with loathing. It is now dethroned and banished, and another glorious King reigns instead, gradually becoming absolute monarch of every feeling, thought, word, and action.

3. Then we are in spirit present with the Lord. The indwelling Holy Ghost brings His presence to us. This is a thing which we cannot possibly understand, and it is useless to try to explain it. The Holy Ghost, though a distinct Person, is one with the Father and the Son, and is called indiscrimi-

nately the "Spirit of God," and the "Spirit of Christ;" and, according to our Lord's own declaration, we have in that Spirit the realization and the enjoyment of His presence, and therefore we believe, and those who are truly Christians *feel*, that it is so. But in speaking upon this we get quite out of our depth. It is an infinite subject, and requires an infinite mind to grapple with it: our minds are only finite, yet we grasp it by faith. By the promises and declarations of the Lord Jesus we know that we have whilst here His holy presence, not in the same personal and perceptible manner as we shall have in the world to come, and yet, I suppose, in the same way as regards our spirits. We cannot see Him, but we know that the Holy Spirit brings us His presence in a more real and spiritual manner than could be the case were He still present in the body. And though in the next world we shall have the additional joy of seeing Him face to face, still the great fundamental source of joy will be there also—as I apprehend—this same spiritual presence realized and enjoyed in an infinitely greater degree.

Thus it is our privilege as Christian people to have, even while we are here, to a certain extent, more or less limited, the end or object of our faith—to have heaven upon earth. Not that earth in its present state could ever be to us a heaven as regards outward surroundings. Our souls, purified by the grace of Christ, must be continually vexed with the unlawful deeds of the wicked. But retiring into the secret chambers of our own spirits we find there, through the Holy Spirit's work, a condition of things capable of giving such joy as cannot be expressed, understood, or explained—joy unspeakable. We find that Jesus gives us even now those things which will be throughout eternity the great characteristic features of spiritual life in heaven, which will be the main springs and sources of heavenly joy.

Therefore we ought to be a cheerful and rejoicing people ; and let us all strive to be. Let us strive and watch and pray that our lives may be such that we may enjoy as much, and realize as completely, as is possible, the *present* salvation Christ has given us.

We sometimes hear men of the world ex-

pressing hopes that some day they will get to heaven, yet they will not try to acquire that without which heaven cannot exist. They have no idea of what heaven is, or what constitutes heaven. They look upon heaven as a delightful place, without pain or sorrow, without disease or parting, where all will be bright and beautiful, and where there will be no jarring or unpleasantness. Such, no doubt, it will be. But let a soul, sinful, impure, and unwashed, be granted all of this, heaven will be as far away from him as ever. He would enjoy it little enough, for he would be entirely in an uncongenial atmosphere.

The first things essential to heaven are deliverance from condemnation, freedom from sin, and the presence of Jesus. Then, having obtained these, the delightful outward circumstances and surroundings are so much added to our joy. They form the complement of heaven. And we who have accepted Jesus may rejoice in a present complete salvation, and may look forward to a future complete heaven. And even while we are here we may, as St Peter tells us, "rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified," and so

will heavenly light shine upon our path ; so  
will heavenly joy light up continually our  
life.

“O heavenly traveller ! hasting  
From scenes where nought is lasting,  
Its glimmering lamps all wasting,  
Earth darkens on thy view ;  
While now the world forsaking,  
The pilgrim's path thou'rt taking,  
What light around thee breaking  
Makes every object new !

“ When earthly joys have faded,  
And when by grief invaded,  
Those spots are all o'ershaded,  
Once bright with life's fair morn ;  
Then beams from heaven descending,  
With each dark shadow blending,  
A lovelier radiance lending,  
The Christian's path adorn.

“ Nor fear to lose their shining,  
Like earth's poor stars declining ;  
No ! more, yet more refining,  
This light will bless thy way.  
O'er hill and valley streaming,  
O'er death's dark river beaming  
The dawn progressive seeming  
Of heaven's eternal day.”

C. ELLIOT.

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Of heaven's eternal day.”

C. ELLIOT.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S LIGHT IS TO SHINE.

" Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight  
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined  
So clear, as in no face with more delight."

MILTON.

" Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled ; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."—  
Acts iv. 13.

THE Apostles Peter and John, who with James were specially favoured by their Divine Master during His life on earth, and now seem in consequence to be specially drawn together, stand before the Jewish Sanhedrim awaiting the sentence which that learned, jealous, and self-righteous body may think fit to pass upon them, having previously, like Paul in after times before the wretched Felix, answered for themselves according as they

were taught by the indwelling Holy Ghost. The deed for which they are judged being, however, of very doubtful criminality, they cannot readily decide upon the punishment to be inflicted. They therefore consult privately, and find that they cannot safely do anything to them, they having performed a notable miracle, which it is utterly impossible to gainsay; and so they threaten them and let them go.

What was it that thus brought the Apostles into notice, and excited the astonishment of the Sanhedrim? It was their acting upon the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and exercising the power He gave them both in word and deed before the people and the Sanhedrim. The story is familiar to every Bible reader. As the two Apostles enter the Temple at the ninth hour of the day for prayer, a poor man, lame from his birth, and well known in Jerusalem, is being carried thither and placed at the gate called Beautiful, to excite the pity of those passing in and out, and so get a living by their alms. He begs of Peter and John, little thinking how great was the good he would get from those poor men—poor

like their Master, yet possessed of wondrous riches. Their attention being thus drawn to him they cast upon him an earnest compassionate look, and say, "Look on us." The man is instantly all expectation and hope. Then Peter adds, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Taking him by the hand he helps him to his feet. Those feet have never been used before, but now with ease and inexpressible delight he stands and walks and leaps, "he enters with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God." A wondering crowd quickly gathers round them, and in Solomon's porch Peter speaks to them earnest words of truth and power. He accuses them, in his address, of denying the Holy One and the Just, and desiring a murderer instead, and of killing the Prince of Life. But he tells them also that He has risen from the dead, and that here they have evidence of that resurrection, for in His name the man was healed. Then he calls upon them to repent and believe in Him.

This sermon is interrupted by the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, but not before many have believed, and the Apostles are imprisoned for the night. Next day they are brought up before the Sanhedrim, "the highest ecclesiastical and civil court of the Jews," for trial; and Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, tells them plainly and boldly that by the despised Jesus of Nazareth, crucified by them and raised from the dead by God, the lame man was healed, and that by Him alone they, as well as all others, could be saved. And "when they saw the confidence of Peter and John, and had understood that they were unlearned in the law, and private persons (not acknowledged teachers of the law), they marvelled; and they recognised them that they were (formerly) with Jesus."

They knew from what station of life the Apostles had been taken. They would have no difficulty in perceiving that they were poor Galilean fishermen, though their life with Jesus must have given them an appearance of superiority and refinement not common amongst that class, and they were

doubtless naturally very superior in intelligence. These poor and simple fishermen they now heard speaking with an ease, a power, a fire, which professed and well-trained orators might well have envied. They were able to quiet a scoffing multitude, to rivet their attention, to sway them by their words, and to bring many round to their way of thinking—at least, to send them away thoughtful and touched. And thus they spoke without premeditation, without hesitation or shrinking, even before themselves, a body of learned and dignified men, met together for the purpose of examining them, and able to imprison, and otherwise to injure them.

They knew also that they were not educated in the law, were not professionally acquainted with the Scriptures, were not recognised teachers of divine learning, and yet they set forth their doctrines, not with the uncertainty, the care, the subtilty, of men who are trying to establish new doctrines which are not likely to be readily received, and have but a poor shifting foundation upon which to rest, but with all the confidence and authority of men who are fully persuaded of the truth of

what they teach, and have been set apart by divine appointment for the work they are undertaking, and are determined to carry it through though at the risk of their lives; are resolved to lay a foundation during their own lifetime upon which others may build, and rear to completion in time the fabric which they are commencing amidst weariness, weakness, opposition, and discouragement, but in unswerving hope and faith. They spoke with a fearless confidence with which even the Scribes and Doctors of the law would scarcely dare to speak upon scriptural subjects: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation by any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no hesitation, no uncertainty, no fear here; and at this confidence, this boldness, the freeness of speech, the learned Jewish council may well have marvelled. This wonderment led them, of course, to consider how they could have got this power both in working miracles and speaking with effect, and their thoughts were

drawn back to Jesus, and they perceived that not only did He possess that wonderful power in word and deed which drew multitudes round and led many to cast in their lot with Him, but that He had transmitted that same power to His principal followers, of the number of whom they had no difficulty in recognising these to be, by their words and deeds, even if they did not know them to be such by their persons.

There was, then, in these first disciples of Jesus that which excited notice, astonishment, and admiration, not merely in unbiased observers, but in those who were their greatest foes, and were bent upon their suppression somehow or other. It must therefore have been such as could not be resisted ; it must have been of a nature open and manifest to all, and that could not be explained away. And as we are followers of the same Master, as we are animated by the same Spirit, as we profess the same rule of life, we also should so live and act and speak as to be recognised in the same indubitable manner as having been with Jesus, and be noticed—often, perhaps, wondered at—by the consistency of our



lives, and our earnest and effective speaking, and by our acting according to the teaching of the Bible, and upon the impulses of the Holy Spirit.

We may observe, then, that they were brought into notice, (1.) in the first place, by relieving a poor man's bodily need. By the power of God they healed his lameness, and gave him perfect strength, which had hitherto been withheld from him all through his life, a period of above forty years. (2.) Then they stood forth decidedly on the side of Christ. They did not try to make any compromise with evil, nor even to slip away unobserved before the multitude collected. They stood forth conspicuous and dauntless amidst them all, and declared themselves servants of Jesus, and said that by Him they had done the miracle, and that in them there was no power or goodness that came not from Him—what they were, they were through Him; what they had done, they had done through Him, the crucified One of Nazareth. (3.) They also exercised in the Master's cause that strange power of speech given them by the Holy Spirit, who influenced them so mightily and completely.

So should it always be with the Christian.

(1.) He should be distinguished for a spirit of compassion and benevolence, desiring to relieve the sufferings, as far as he is able, of those with whom he comes in contact. His power of doing good is not limited by his pecuniary wealth. He cannot say, "Because I am poor I can do nothing to relieve my neighbour's afflictions; I can do nothing towards helping him to bear his weighty burdens; I can in no way aid him." Our Lord had no money, but He did during His life incalculable good: the Apostles had no silver or gold, but they bestowed upon the lame man that which he would rather have had than thousands of talents of gold and silver. So, a word of sympathy and kindness, encouragement and hope, is oftentimes worth more than any amount of money, and that word can only be spoken effectively by the Christian; for it must come from the heart—a heart fully assured of the truth of what is said; a heart longing for the good and happiness of others. In the hour of sorrow loving words of sympathy will often cheer the heart that would otherwise droop and pine away with grief. In the hour

of failure and discouragement a word of hope will rouse the despairing spirit to renewed energies, will inspire new determination, will give new strength, and the baffled one will rise and march forward to success. In times of pain and sickness how much will kind and gentle words, inspiring cheerfulness and forgetfulness of ills, often do towards restoring the patient to health and strength again. It is the duty of the Christian to administer to those who are in affliction of any kind, with judicious care, the medicine of loving words of sympathy, hope, and cheerfulness, as opportunity is afforded. And this can be done by the poorest and the simplest, by any one who has a warm and tender heart touched by the Saviour's love. When, however, he has pecuniary means as well, he must bestow also of his silver and gold, with all generosity, but still with circumspection, to relieve the bodily wants of others, dealing out at the same time his heart-stores of kindness and sympathy.

(2.) He should be, further, distinguished for decision of character in the service of Christ. There should be no appearance of halting between two opinions as regards the funda-

mental points of religion, no hovering between Christ and Satan, no hankering after the abandoned world : all must be for Christ. He must live and work for Christ. The glory of God in Christ must be the one great object of his life. To this he is set apart by the grace of God, and to this he must be devoted. Towards this, directly or indirectly, the work of his life must tend. In all his works, begun, continued, and ended in the Lord, he must seek to glorify His holy name. And this he must do by setting an example of diligence and faithfulness in secular employments, as well as by earnestness and devotion in religious matters. For this he must fight earnestly against his besetting sins and his many temptations, and live as much up to his profession as he can, looking up continually to God for grace and strength to do so. There should not be any appearance of an attempt to combine the service of God and mammon, for Christ declares such a union to be impossible: a man must serve the one or the other, and there should be no doubt upon which side he is. His whole life should testify to the fact that he has been with Jesus, that he is

indeed—not merely nominally—a follower of His, and that his goodness, and his power of doing good, are not the result of anything inherent in himself, but of the indwelling of the Almighty Spirit and of his faith in the Lord Jesus.

(3.) He should also be distinguished for his earnest, effective words in his Master's cause, in bearing witness to Him, and in winning the souls of sinners to faith in Him. There is no doubt that those who go forth in hope and faith, and with an earnest longing to speak for Christ, are strengthened, helped, guided, and taught by the Holy Spirit, that so mightily influenced the apostles; and the effects of the inworking of that Holy Spirit are often very great and very marked. Now there are two objects which the Christian should have in view in carrying on his blessed work of speaking for his Master—the comfort and edification of his brethren in the Lord, and the winning of the hearts of sinners to the Saviour, that they also may enjoy eternally the bliss of heaven. In both these works the Lord employs His faithful people. Both are equally important, and in both are

needed equally the teaching and the blessing of God. The Holy Spirit still gives oftentimes to earnest faithful workers a power of speech which is not naturally theirs. Thus we find persons who have great difficulty in expressing themselves, and so conveying ideas, and imparting knowledge, to others upon any secular subject, though themselves well instructed in it, able not unfrequently to speak with ease and power in the cause of Christ; able to declare in glowing words His deep and boundless love; able to impart with clearness that spiritual instruction which they themselves have gathered in many a happy hour spent in the study of the Word of God.

For such earnest and effective speaking of the truth, the Christian should be distinguished. In doing this he must ever exercise care and judgment, and seek to be guided by God as to when to speak and what to say. More harm is often done by injudicious speaking to careless persons upon religious truths than by keeping silence. Therefore let us observe that the apostles did not speak before the Sanhedrim until they were ques-

tioned: "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" Then, when opportunity was thus given them to speak with propriety for their Lord, they did. We may observe the same in the case of St Stephen the deacon. He did not speak, though able to exercise such a wonderful power over his audience as we find he was, until the high priest said to him, "Are these things so?" We must then await our opportunity to speak to men upon the truths of salvation; otherwise we shall often give offence, and cause them to close their ears more tightly against the truth. But when opportunity offers by the Lord's blessing, either by the exercise of tact on our part in conversation, leading on gradually and gently to these important subjects, or by the subject being suggested by another, we must declare boldly and lovingly the Saviour we have found, and offer that salvation which is free to all, begging them to flee from the wrath to come, to repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, even that of a changed life devoted to the service of God.

True Christians, we know, will generally be

ready to speak upon religious matters, though many often shrink from commencing it. To them it is a refreshment, and means of cheering and strengthening. And so speaking often to one another, the Lord will hearken and hear it, and a book of remembrance will be written before Him for them that fear the Lord and think upon His name, and they shall be His when He maketh up His jewels, and He will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. (Mal. iii. 16, 17). In this life, too, they will be blessed abundantly, and made an abundant blessing.

Thus by his unselfishness and love, by the consistency of his life and behaviour, and by his earnestness and power in the cause of Christ, both in word and deed, should the Christian be observed by the world, so that all who know him, whether Christians or no Christians, may take knowledge of him that he has undoubtedly been with Jesus, has been taught and blessed, and is influenced by the Holy Spirit. Being enlightened by the Spirit Divine, we are to be lights in this dark world of sin ; being saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be as salt in the midst of cor-



ruptible matter, preserving the wicked world from utter destruction. We must not hide our light beneath a bushel, nor must we lose our saltness, which is the blamelessness of our walk and conversation ; for then we shall be fit only to be cast away. Rather, like a candle on a candlestick, and a city on a hill, we are to stand forth conspicuous to all around, examples to the world of what Christianity can do, and of the brightness, the peace, the beauty of the Christian life. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

The Christian is travelling upon a road tending in the direction exactly opposite to that which is trodden by all the rest of the world, and its character is quite the opposite. The road he traverses leads upward to life ; the other is a downward road leading to death. His path is bright, illumined with heavenly light ; the other is dark indeed, darkened by the mists of sin and folly. Therefore, journeying in the opposite direction, how conspicuous he should be. It is difficult to understand how there can be any

doubt as to the way he is going. The Lord's people are ever to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and by that distinguishing mark are all to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.

We must, each one for himself, strive earnestly that it may be so with us. We must at all times show our colours. We must always wear our Christian uniform. We must ever have our lamps burning brightly, well supplied with the oil of the Spirit. By the grace of Christ—without His grace, of course, we could never do it—we must live holy and consistent lives, resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil, which even from our earliest childhood we have promised to renounce by the lips of those who at our baptism “did promise and vow three things in our name,” and that promise when we come to age ourselves are bound to perform, and many of us have ratified it with our own lips in the presence of God, and the congregation of His people. We must strive to make the commandments and teaching of God's Word our rule of life, and do all we can to bring glory to His great Name, by doing good to all

men according to our opportunity, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

“ Jesus bids us shine  
With a pure clear light,  
Like a little candle  
Burning in the night.  
In the world is darkness,  
So we must shine—  
*You* in your small corner,  
*I* in mine.

“ Jesus bids us shine,  
First of all, for Him ;  
Well He sees and knows it,  
If our light be dim.  
He looks down from Heaven  
To see us shine—  
*You* in your small corner,  
*I* in mine.

“ Jesus bids us shine,  
Yes, for all around :  
Oh, what depths of darkness  
In the world are found !  
There's sin, there's want and sorrow,  
So we must shine—  
*You* in your small corner,  
And *I* in mine.”

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE STEADILY PROGRESSIVE.

“ The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask ;  
Room to deny ourselves—a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.”

KEBLE.

“ But *WE all*, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”—2 COR. iii. 18.

IN this passage the Apostle refers to the veil which Moses placed upon his illumined face, whilst speaking with the children of Israel, after he had been permitted to see that wonderful vision of the glory of Jehovah, when on the top of Sinai. This vision of the Divine glory, “ though only of the back or reflexion of it, produced such an effect upon Moses’ face, that the skin of it shone, though without Moses observing it.” “ The Apostle

refers to it," says Prof. Keil, "for the purpose of contrasting the perishable glory of the law with the far higher and imperishable glory of the Gospel. At the same time, he regards the veil which covered Moses' face as a symbol of the obscuring of the truth revealed in the Old Testament. But this does not exhaust the significance of this splendour. The office [which Moses filled] could only confer such glory upon the possessor by virtue of the glory of the blessings which it contained, and conveyed to those for whom it was established. Consequently the brilliant light on Moses' face also set forth the glory of the Old Covenant, and was intended, both for Moses and the people, as a foresight and pledge of the glory to which Jehovah had called, and would eventually exalt, the people of His possession." Christ was the glory of the Old Covenant as well as of the New, and Christ was the fulfilment of the Old Covenant. In Him the Old Covenant passes away, and the veil is removed which concealed from them of old the glory and the end of that which is now abolished, the dispensation under which they lived.


The veil was then a symbol of the concealment both of the nature and object of the Old Dispensation. They were able to see clearly neither its transitoriness, nor the Divine Saviour to whom it was to lead them, and of whom all its ceremonies were typical. But now that Christ has come, and has done His glorious work of fulfilling and completing the law, and effecting man's redemption, the veil is taken away from the hearts of all who believe in and receive Him, so that we are able to see with all distinctness the glory which was hidden of old. We are able now to see that the law was a tutor, or guardian, leading to Christ (Gal. iii. 24), and we can see how it pointed and led on gradually to Him by means of types and prophecies, becoming, as the end drew nearer, clearer and more patent. We can see also that He was the antitype, and the fulfilment of all that was prefigured and prophesied concerning the Messiah. The way of salvation lies open before us. We see a suffering and dying Saviour, submitting to death in order to vanquish it, and receiving exaltation and glory at the right of the Father,

and reigning supreme over a spiritual kingdom.

But on the heart of the faithless Jew the veil still lies. Still he reads the law; still Moses is his guide; still he looks for a Messiah in the future—a reigning, not a suffering one; a king, not a poor mechanic; a glorious conqueror and deliverer, not a suffering and dying Saviour. And so that veil must remain until they turn to the Lord, believe in Jesus, and accept the humble sufferer. Then shall the veil be taken away, and they will see in Christ the full glory of the abolished law, the glory of Moses, the glory of the prophets, even that of typifying, foretelling, and leading to the Saviour of the world.

We who have accepted Jesus, and therefore have the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us, and so partake of that freedom which accompanies the possession of the Spirit,—“for,” as the Apostle says, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;” the liberty of those who are “not under the law but under grace,”—we with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. That mirror is

the Gospel of the grace of God, into which we look with the eye of faith, and see therein a glorified Saviour and King, even Jesus at the right hand of God exalted, a triumphant Conqueror, an untiring Advocate. Beneath His feet we see sin, death, and Hades, all conquered and crushed. The serpent's head is bruised, and his days are numbered. His own body bears the marks of the conflict past: His heel has, as it were, been bruised therein. But now He is all-glorious for ever. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. The palm of victory He carries in His hand, the crown of sovereignty and of reward is on His brow once tortured with the thorny crown of mockery, His sufferings are wholly past and gone, the halo of celestial and eternal beauty rests around Him, and He is now become an object of admiration, desire, love, and worship to all who look into the Gospel mirror with the eye of faith, and behold Him reflected there in His risen, triumphant, and eternal glory. Not yet face to face, but through a mirror, darkly as compared with by-and-by, we behold Him; and, beholding Him, we love





Him as our Saviour, our King, and our God. We behold Him wafting to the Father, as it were, the savour of the sweet incense rising from the earth, the faithful worship of the saints, so acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

The result of thus beholding in the Gospel the reflection of the glory of the Lord, having it continually before us as we should have that of the lovely glades, and glens, and copses of its distant shore upon the calm bosom of a placid lake that lay before our dwelling, is that we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." A great and marvellous spiritual change takes place. The image of Christ is formed within us, just as the image of an object upon which the eye rests is formed upon the retina within, in all its beauty and completeness, but in miniature. So the image of Christ's spiritual perfections and beauties, His immortality, His sinlessness, His palm of triumph, His crown of glory, His joy in His unity with the Father, His spirit of universal love, is found (as it were) within the Christian, like in form and

beauty, but on a smaller scale, and more or less perfect according to the degree of heavenly light that illuminates his soul, and the strength of that faith by means of which the reflection in the mirror is discerned. Spiritually he is changed into the same image. He becomes like Him in whom the Father is well pleased, and thus he is made a son and heir of God by adoption, a fit inhabitant of the realms of light, worthy to dwell with Jesus, and see Him face to face.

This change in us who are true and faithful servants of the Lord is effected through the agency of that Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us ; who dwells and works within us. He "sanctifieth us and all the elect people of God." He makes us like the Saviour ; like Him who is our great High Priest, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26) ; like Him who is our Elder Brother, loving, long-suffering, patient, bearing with and helping the infirmities of others, and engaging in continual intercession ; like Him who is our anointed King, triumphing over sin and Satan, and inheriting the kingdom

of heaven. In effecting this great change He uses various, numberless instrumentalities. He seldom works without means, but He has at His disposal all things in heaven and earth, and He uses now this, now that, as occasion demands. He forms the people of Christ by the arrangement of earthly affairs, and by direct spiritual influence, Christ Himself being the model according to which He moulds them.

Man was originally made a pure and perfect being after the likeness of God : "In the image of God created He him." But since that first creation man's beautiful and perfect spiritual form has been marred, disfigured, and contaminated by the repeated efforts of Satan to destroy all semblance to the Divine image, and to stamp upon it as many of his own deformities, and besmear it with as much of his own pollution as possible, and so to render him fit only to be cast away from God's presence for ever into the bottomless pit prepared for *his* reception. In this foul enterprise he is, in the main, to be baffled. The poor battered soul of man is being remoulded by the Holy Spirit, in the case of

all who accept the Saviour, into more than its pristine beauty of form and likeness to God. He is making him in all respects conformable to the image of the glorified Son of God.

This change is not wrought suddenly, but by a gradual process, during our life on earth ; "we are changed into the same image *from glory to glory.*" From one grade of attained moral excellence and strength we are enabled to step on to another, and so we proceed by the grace of God from glory to glory, so He gradually moulds us into a beautiful and heavenly form. Gradually there is formed within us that beauteous image which we behold reflected in the Gospel mirror, so attractive, so exalting, so encouraging, to all who look much into it.

In this work He has to deal differently with different characters. One is soft and pliable, and is easily moulded, like clay, by gentle means : another is hard and stubborn, and requires many a heavy blow to bring it into shape. Each one has just the kind of treatment necessary, and each is "transformed into the same image from glory to

glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." Each is a living stone to be placed in a glorious temple, for beauty and grandeur unsurpassed, unimagined by any but God. The foundation has been safely and firmly laid in Apostles and Prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone, and now it rises stage by stage, as each stone is finished and put in its place, and we have reason to think that the walls must now be rising high, and the building approaching completion.

In such an edifice each stone must assume outwardly, in some degree, a different appearance, though really the same in kind, and this diversity necessitates a different process of preparation for each. One stone has to be cut into a plain square block, to form the solid wall; another has to be rounded, smoothed, and polished, to form the column of a supporting pillar; another has to be delicately carved, to form some beautiful ornamentation. So the position in the completed Church of God which each Christian soul is to occupy hereafter is arranged by the wisdom of the great Architect, and the Spirit fashions it accordingly by a gradual

process, and at the second coming of the Lord this sacred and beautiful spiritual edifice will be completed. "Now therefore," says St Paul, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 19-22). Thus the Spirit working gradually, constantly, and with penetrating discrimination, forms within each faithful heart the likeness of the Lord Jesus, and fits the soul in every respect, by such means as He sees is most suitable, for its place in the holy temple of God, the Church triumphant and glorified.

This is the case with all true Christians. St Paul says, "*We all*," *i.e.*, all we who have beheld, and do behold with the eye of faith "the glory of the Lord" reflected in the Gospel, as in a mirror exquisitely polished. This work is going on within us all, and will

continue until the great day when it is perfected. In the unfinished words of the late Dean Daunt : " He carries on this work in the soul, until 'we all' who are the subjects of His renewing grace, 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

" Until presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, and perfected in the beauty of holiness by the power of God the Holy Ghost, we shall shine in the light of God among the sinless ones . . . . and in a nobler sweeter song, we shall join our voices to those of the heavenly choir.

" Evermore proclaiming the love of the Father.

" Evermore testifying to the glory of the Son.

" Evermore making mention of the power of the Spirit.

" Evermore praising Him, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."\*

\* "Donellan Lectures," published after the death of their lamented author. The last one, from which the above is

This is the path to heaven along which the Christian soul is journeying towards the haven of eternal rest where he would be. The process of gradual conformation of spirit to the image of the Lord Jesus, wrought by the Holy Ghost, must follow and result from true conversion, true acceptance of the blessed Saviour, the entrance of the narrow gate. Towards this the toiling and suffering, the fighting and watching against temptation and sin, the falls and wanderings repented of, the joys and sorrows of the Christian life, all tend by the grace of God. All the vicissitudes of his life are overruled by that great Spirit to promote this end, even that of making him like the Saviour, and of fitting him for the position he is to occupy in the glorified state which will follow the grave and the resurrection.

If, then, we are in any doubt about our condition before God, and we wish to know decidedly whether heaven is indeed our home, and we are travelling thither, whether we

taken, was left unfinished, only rough notes as the above being preserved of a portion of it ; but they speak of a condition of things since experienced by the happy spirit of him who wrote them.



have truly accepted Jesus, and have within us a real, sound, and living faith which will stand us in stead at the last great day of judgment,—then we must think and question in our own hearts whether we are making any advance in holiness and purity of life ; whether we are being in any degree lifted up above the things of this world, and are setting our eyes more fixedly, and with more fervent longing, to the distant banks of the river of death, which shine with so pure and bright a light ; whether we are at all growing in likeness to Jesus, and are being changed into His beautiful and glorious image ; and whether love to God and our neighbour is becoming more marked as a feature of our character, and as a principle in our every action.

This is the test to which we must bring our Christianity, and this is the only safe and sure one. If with unveiled face we behold as in a mirror truly with the eye of faith the glory of the Lord, then by the Spirit dwelling within we are gradually changed into the same image from glory to glory. This is a necessary consequence. We cannot separate

true faith, living faith, saving faith, from advance in holiness in some degree, for the great and mighty Spirit—that Spirit which no man, no principle, can resist—is working within every one who is a truly awakened and living soul, and the object for which He is working is the beautifying of the soul by making it like Jesus.

If, after careful and candid heart-searching, we find that we are *in some degree* thus advancing, we may with all thankfulness and humility feel sure that by the grace of God we are truly safe, and have passed from death unto life. But we are not therefore to rest on our oars, and think that, all being well because the Spirit is working in us, we need do nothing, and make no efforts to advance. All is indeed well if the Spirit works within, for He will carry on and finish the work He has begun, but we also must do our part, or our loss will be great. It is a joyful and encouraging thought, that “it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure ;” but we must not forget that this precious promise is inseparably connected with the exhortation,

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The term salvation here does not of course mean merely deliverance from eternal death—that is effected once for all by Christ’s all-sufficient atonement ; but it includes also that sanctification by the Spirit which must follow true conversion ; and this work we must help on with all our might by praying earnestly, and striving courageously, by living pure, religious, self-denying lives, and by “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

If, on the other hand, we think that we are all right as regards our souls, that we have faith and are therefore saved, and yet on examination find that we are not in any way making advance in spirituality, are not being changed into the likeness of Jesus, are living as much as ever selfish and worldly lives, are living and working merely for money, worldly advancement, or pleasure, — then we may feel pretty sure, as we look deep down into our own hearts and find that this is the case, that our faith is dead, that we are deceiving ourselves, that we are still in our sins. Oh ! how dreadful is it to deceive ourselves

in such a matter ! How dreadful to be going down to destruction with Gospel light shining all about us, and Gospel truths and promises and warnings in our minds and on our lips. But oh ! we need none of us do that. Consult the Bible, simply and fully, follow its direction, and be guided by its light. Come to the Lord Jesus, our precious Saviour, and follow the paths of righteousness, so shalt thou be happy for ever and ever.

And while steady advance and gradual progression may be taken as a sign to us of the truth and sincerity of our Christianity, upon it also depends, and with it keeps pace, that joy and peace in believing which is the privilege and the heritage of the servant of God. In proportion as we grow in grace, as we step from glory to glory, led and aided by the Spirit's mighty hand, shall we be able the more to rejoice in the Lord at all times ; shall we be able the more to rejoice with that joy unspeakable and glorified, even while we are here, of which we have spoken above (chap. ix.), and that is an earthly foretaste of heaven ; shall we be able to experience, as we journey on, the constant spiritual presence of

Jesus in the Holy Ghost, and live lives bright and peaceful and pure in this dark vale of tears and of sin. In proportion as we thus advance will our light shine before men, so as to be seen by others, and illuminate their path also. And we shall work and speak with more power and effect for Him who is our Saviour, our Master, our King, loved continually with a more deep and fervent love, and served with an ever-increasing devotion and singleness of heart. As we draw nearer to heaven—and each step we take in likeness to Jesus is a step towards our heavenly home—will the glory irradiating, as it were, from Him who sits upon the throne and the Lamb, that glory which shall lighten for ever the new Jerusalem, shine through the opening gates of pearl upon us, and so shall we go from glory to glory until we reach the perfect blaze of celestial light, and experience the unutterable joys of PARADISE REGAINED.

“ Thus, when clouds are passing o’er us,  
Grief our spirits may subdue ;  
But a race ‘is set before us,’  
And, though faint, we must pursue ;  
Lovely star ! our model be ;  
May we shine through clouds like thee !

‘ And, like thee, while freely lending  
Light to all within our sphere,  
To our unseen centre tending,  
Swift as bright may we appear !  
Then, when thy brief course is o’er,  
We shall rise to set no more.”

C. ELLIOTT.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ENTRANCE INTO PERFECT DAY.

“What they feel 'mid yonder light,  
Or what gems their walls make bright,  
Jacinth's or Chalcedon's glow,—  
They that are within thee know !  
In the streets of yonder city  
May I, with the holy throng  
Joined with Moses and Elias,  
Sing the hallelujah song.”—BONAR.

“For our conversation is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

The following is the more correct rendering of this verse :—

“Our commonwealth—the state of which we are citizens—subsists in the heavens, from whence also we earnestly expect as a Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transform the body of our humiliation, so as to be conformable to the body of His glory, according

to the effectual operation of His power also to subject all things unto Himself."

HERE we are first reminded that we belong even now to the heavenly country ; that is, we who are truly the Lord's people, children of God born of water and of the Spirit, willing recipients of His grace, having souls cleansed from every stain in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, being delivered from all condemnation by being found in Jesus Christ. We who are in this happy condition, though still in the body, are strangers and sojourners here, our home being in the Father's house of many mansions. There is now the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and from thence we know He will return to us according to His promise, and receive His faithful people to Himself. And for this return, which will free us from all sin and infirmity, we are waiting patiently, and are expecting it with more or less of earnestness according to our advance in grace.

We look for Him as a Saviour, a glorious, loving Saviour, who *has done* for us great things, and *will do* for us greater still. He will deliver us wholly from the things of the



present world, which now occupy—and necessarily too—so much of our time and thoughts, all more or less perishing and grovelling in their character. He will sever the last band that binds us to them, the numerous other bands having been severed previously one by one as time passed on, and we shall be free to fly away to meet Him in the air, and join the descending host.

In the last chapter we dwelt upon the process of sanctification, the gradual change of the Christian's spirit into the image of the Lord Jesus, which is continually going on in this life, and may be expressed as 'stepping heavenward': now our thoughts are drawn on to the consummation, the condition to which that process leads eventually, viz., perfect likeness to Jesus in our bodily as well as our spiritual nature.

The Apostle speaks here, as so often elsewhere, as if he would himself be alive at the Lord's future advent; and so we see that even then he was on the look-out, expecting Him to come speedily, and longing for the great and solemn event. But it applies to us all, whether at the time we be alive or dead. In

the case of all the Christian Church it will be accompanied by the same result : " He shall change the body of our humiliation, so as to be conformable to the body of His glory."

At the time of the Lord's return will take place the resurrection of the slumbering bodies of the saints, which is called in the Word of God "the first resurrection." All His people shall rise from the dead as did the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was "the first fruits of them that slept," and by His resurrection we are assured that we also shall certainly be raised, if we have died, at His glorious coming. Not, however, with the same poor, feeble, sin-stained bodies, but with bodies vastly changed. Upon this subject the Apostle speaks at length in 1 Cor. xv, the passage appointed to be read as the lesson in our beautiful and appropriate burial service : " But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which *thou* sowest is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but

God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh : but there is one kind of flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial : but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars : for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy : and as is the heavenly,

such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. . . . . Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality" (vers. 35-49, and 51-53).

The corruptible, mortal body of our humiliation will be changed, whether then dead or alive, into the incorruptible, immortal body of eternal glory, like that now occupied by Jesus in the highest heaven, which we shall thenceforth wear for ever. That body will resemble in all essential respects the body of Christ's glory; the body "with which He is clothed in the glorified state" (Lightfoot). This will be the finishing stroke of that work which is being gradually performed by His Holy Spirit—viz., changing us body and soul to likeness to Him. We shall then be completely like Him. We shall then be made

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perfect—perfect in holiness, purity, and love ; perfect in mental and bodily powers ; perfect in freedom from all sorrow and pain ; perfect in *the image of the glorified Jesus* ; perfect as an object of delight to the great Triune Jehovah.

Then no sin will stain the soul, or disturb the conscience : we shall be holy, even as Christ is holy ; sanctified entirely. No bitter ingredients will mingle then with the sweet draught of our cup of happiness ; no thorn will prick the finger when it plucks the fragrant rose ; no stone will grit the teeth when they press the luscious fruit. The joys of that state will be unalloyed, and we shall never weary of them. Feeble minds and bodies will be unknown, their powers will be greatly quickened. We shall be able to dive to infinite depths in the rolling sea of knowledge, and soar to infinite heights in the tranquil firmament of wisdom. We shall not travel from place to place weary and footsore : locomotion will be easy and quick, how effected we know not. We shall be able to work hour by hour, and day by day, at such duties as present themselves, but we shall not tire. Sorrow and pain of

every kind will then be gone, all tears wiped away, all wounds healed, all maladies cured. All evil will be left behind. Being all pure, exalted, and glorified, body and spirit being fashioned like Him, we shall enter complete and eternal day. Then at once we shall have perfect joy and peace. At once we shall experience heaven as regards our own personal feelings, and that will be perfect heaven in all its essential characteristics, though we shall not yet have reached the *place* which is to be our eternal abode.

Then will the Church of Christ be complete. The holy Temple of living stones will be reared to the topstone, the Bride will be gloriously attired, and the marriage of the Lamb will take place. The Church is the Bride, the Lamb's wife. We shall be eternally united to Him by the closest of all ties, and at the joyous marriage feast we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints alike of the Legal and Christian dispensations.

“ Wife of the Lamb, known only by His name :  
Oh finite image of the Infinite :  
Oh holy creaturehood, perfect at last :

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Oh true Self raised to true unselfishness,  
Living for Him alone, who is thy life,  
All and in all for Him as He for God."

BICKERSTETH.

So in glorious resurrection bodies, with souls perfectly happy and sinless, shall we reign with Christ on earth through the peaceful millennium. During those thousand years will Satan and his host of rebel angels groan within the walls of their gloomy prison, and chafe at the adamantine chains that bind them firmly there, so that they come not forth to tempt, and seduce from their allegiance to their rightful Lord, the earth's inhabitants. Christ and His people reign. Sin without the devil to fan it into a fierce consuming fire, is crushed and deadened, and merely smoulders out of sight. All willingly submit to the gentle sway of Christ. The Jews accept His yoke, and are again restored to their own land, rejoicing and praising God. All are now at peace. In all the world they "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation" lifts not "sword against nation, neither" do "they learn war any more." (Isa. ii. 4, and Mic. iv. 3). The

earth is "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 14). He is known by all from the least to the greatest. (Jer. xxxi. 34, and Heb. viii. 11). In the sacred and all-reverenced name of Jesus every knee bows down in humble adoration, every idol is destroyed throughout the world, and every tongue confesses "that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 10, 11).

But this peace must be disturbed again. The thousand years will pass away; the prison gates will open, the chains fall off, and the demons will be free once more. Temptations recommence for all but the holy Church of Christ. She is above their reach, sharing with Christ His throne, and jointly with Him swaying the mighty sceptre. Now in distant regions first rebellion wakes. Satan forms his armies of mingled men and demons, and they march from every quarter for the final struggle with Omnipotence, growing ever as they travel through the earth. The mighty host assails the sacred city, compassing the holy camp of saints that lies about it. But not one fear is felt therein; not one blow is



struck against it ; every foe is powerless to harm. The fire of God descends with awful ruin, and, in the expressive words of Scripture, *devours* them.

Then will come the last great Judgment, when *all* will have to stand before the great white throne, and be judged by Him that sits thereon, out of the mysterious books, each one according to his works. Then will follow the renovation of heaven and earth, and the establishment of the happy and glorified saints in their eternal home, where they will dwell *for ever with the Lord*.

Here is the destruction of death, spoken of in 1 Cor. xv. as the last enemy to be destroyed by Christ. All now will have been rescued from his power ; all men will have risen with their bodies, both good and bad. The former will have risen to eternal happiness ; the latter "to shame and everlasting contempt." And all things will be placed in subjection to Christ, so that God will be all in all. Every rebel, every antagonist, every enemy, will be vanquished and crushed. Everyone who has dared persistently to dispute His universal sovereignty will have brought on

himself an awful ruin. Everyone who has lived in wilful disobedience, ridiculing His name, despising His people, and treading under foot the Son, the Saviour of the world, will be cast into the bottomless pit, will be thrust away into outer darkness. Earth will be purified from every stain of man's sin and the devil's work by a great conflagration, and the whole of the inanimate and unreasoning creation will be brought into complete subjection to Him, and those men and angels who will not submit will be put altogether away by the fiat of His Almighty will out of His own sight and recollection, and out of the sight and recollection of all His saints. For this, it seems to me, is implied by the idea of being cast into "*outer darkness*," being thrust away from God *altogether*, and never to behold the light again, so as to be in the sight of God and His people as if they had never been.

Thus will He subject all things unto Himself. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He

saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 25-28).

So then, our life on earth being finished, our sojourn in Hades—if that be needed—and the resurrection passed, the calm millennial sabbath of Messiah's peaceful reign enjoyed, the awful judgment over, the subjugation and restoration of all things witnessed with songs of praise, our sanctification and glorification completed, we shall live in eternal happiness and peace, with nothing to disturb or harass, nothing to distress or injure, nothing to detract from perfect joy unspeakable. We shall live in the glorious light of an endless day, for we shall be with Him who is *the light*, shall be like Him in His wondrous perfections and beauties, and shall dwell in a world where love, joy, and light reign for ever and ever.

"O God of Saints, to Thee we cry ;  
O Saviour, plead for us on high ;

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O Holy Ghost, our Guide and Friend,  
Grant us Thy grace till life shall end ;  
That with all saints our rest may be  
In that bright Paradise with Thee."

"O happy soul," says Canon Garbett, "that hast finished thy warfare, and hast accomplished thy race! Happy soul, which hast advanced beneath the Spirit's teaching from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, higher and higher yet, nearer and nearer God! What a wondrous mystic ladder is this on which thou hast climbed to heaven! Its foot in the dust; its top by the throne of the Holy One. Step by step, now painfully, now joyfully, but ever surely, thou hast risen to thine inheritance. There has been many a link between the cross and the crown; but they are united inseparably still. All are but parts of the same work, commenced in penitent conviction, matured in experience, and perfected in glory." \*

This blessed journey which *all* are invited to enter upon, and which the Christian is exhorted to persevere in, is not one of little importance—nay, it is of the *most vital* con-

\* "The Soul's Life," p. 381.

sequence, for upon it depends the question, What will our *eternity* be? If the Christian's life be a toiling, suffering one, that of the worldling is so too. If the Christian's life be characterised by a peace of mind passing all understanding, the worldling has no real peace, and therefore no true pleasure. If the Christian's life be a journey to a state of eternal glory and happiness, the worldling's life and labours are worthless as regards eternity, and bring no ultimate reward. Which of the two is better, off? Is it he whose labours bring a sure and eternal reward of unspeakable value, or he whose life and labours result in punishment and disgrace? Undoubtedly the former. Which is the wiser man? he who chooses a happy life, or he who chooses a miserable death for himself; he who makes time an earnest preparation for eternity, or he who lives entirely for time and takes his chance for eternity; he who, travelling upon a treacherous path, avails himself of the bright light that shines about him, or he who closes his eyes and walks on in wilful darkness? There can be no doubt about the answer. It must be evident

to all that in each case it is the first. The Christian is truly wise ; the wilful, obstinate sinner, in the midst of light and knowledge, we can but designate a fond fool, whoever and whatever he may be.

The Christian reward, the life of eternal glory, is worth all the toiling, the fighting, the weariness, the self-denial its acquirement involves. The journey is well worth taking, considering its end ; and there is enjoyment, amidst all that is apparently adverse to it, even whilst the journey lasts. Therefore let not any Christian be weary and faint-hearted, but let us march on with resolution and faith, pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us not be ashamed of our Christian profession, but let us glory in it, and strive to adorn it *in all things*. If we do this in firm faith, unswerving trust and confidence, in Him who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, then we shall surely wear the crown hereafter—the crown incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved for us. Then shall we be completely changed spiritually into the image of Christ, seen now

with the eye of faith in the Gospel mirror, and the body of our humiliation will be transformed wholly so as to be conformable to the body of His glory, and we shall enter into the *fulness* of the joy of our Lord.

Oh! we would say to *everyone* with all earnestness, to young and old, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, Take up *now* the Christian cross, shield, and sword, mount *at once* the Christian watch-tower, take the Lord Jesus Christ as your portion and example, and journey upward to our happy home. You will find the path a bright one, "shining more and more unto the perfect day," which through Christ the Holy Spirit we shall hereafter reach, and be "*for ever with the Lord.*"

"So when my latest breath  
Shall rend the veil in twain,  
By death I shall escape from death,  
And life eternal gain.  
Knowing as I am known,  
How shall I love that word,  
And oft repeat before the Throne,  
'*For ever with the Lord.*'"

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and

the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and *so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 16-18).



## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

"Such are their joys—and, crowning all,  
That blessed hope of the bright hour,  
When, happy and no more to fall,  
Their spirits shall, with freshened power,  
Rise up rewarded for their trust  
In Him, from whom all goodness springs,  
And, shaking off earth's soiling dust  
From their emancipated wings,  
Wander for ever through those skies  
Of radiance, where Love never dies!"—

MOORE.

"Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."—Rev. iii. 11.

WE have taken the pilgrimage of the Christian, and considered the nature of the narrow path upon which he journeys, the starting point at the strait gate, and the glorious consummation to which it eventually leads. We have seen that it is entered alone by one little gate (as it were) which comparatively few succeed in finding, that gate being the Lord Jesus

Christ entered by faith. We have seen that the path is one of toil and suffering, and that the traveller upon it is ever subject to falls and wanderings ; but yet that it tends ever and steadily onward to a not far distant goal, a future glorious reward. We have seen also that notwithstanding this, its dark side, it is a path characterised in the main by brightness, heavenly light shining upon it, the presence of Jesus giving cheerfulness and joy, the purity which it promotes and necessitates imparting peace, the foretaste of heaven which is experienced exciting hope, perseverance, and expectant longing. We have seen, further, that it is the duty of all who are travelling upon it to reflect upon others the light that shines upon them, to be like a candle upon a candlestick, and a city on a hill, visible to all around, as lights in a dark world, purified spirits in a polluted world, salt in a corrupt world, and so to glorify their God and Saviour, and that Spirit who worketh mightily in them. Finally, we have seen that this pilgrimage is a steady advance towards spiritual perfection, and that it leads ultimately to perfect con-

formity to the image of Jesus, which will be attained by all at His second coming, when they will be taken to dwell for ever with Him. I wish now, in conclusion, to speak a word of warning and exhortation, basing my remarks upon the above solemn and suggestive words taken from the Apocalyptic vision of St John : " Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

This second coming of Christ is set before the Christian in the word of God as the great object of his hope, and joyful anticipation. There seems much reason to believe that that important and solemn event may be very near now. It is of course an utter impossibility to tell, for our Lord says plainly that He will come as a thief in the night, suddenly and without previous definite warning. But there seems good reason for the true and faithful members of the Christian Church now to lift up their heads because their redemption draweth nigh, and long ago the Lord Jesus Himself, appearing to St John on the lonely isle of Patmos upon that memorable Sabbath-day, says in plain and decided terms, " Behold, I come *quickly*." The

words were primarily addressed to the Philadelphian Church, but they are spoken in reality to all the Lord's people, calling upon them to stand their ground against temptation, to fight against their spiritual foes with all earnestness, and to watch with all patience and untiring wakefulness.

The time therefore is short for all, good and bad alike. To the good, *i.e.*, those who are in Christ Jesus, this fact will be no source of regret. They do not fear His coming, solemn and awful though it be. They will, by the grace of God, have their lamps burning still, and will go forth with songs of praise to meet the approaching Bridegroom, and go in with Him to the marriage. It will be the time of their redemption—the time of their final and complete redemption from sin and every kind of sorrow, from feebleness and tears, from the body of death which has ever been clinging about them throughout their journey here, and which wrings from the Apostle St Paul the bitter cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” It will also be the time of the deliverance of all the servants of Christ

who have passed into the Paradise of Hades from the power of death, the grave will restore their bodies in a state of glory and immortality, and they will be completely delivered from corruption ; and the saints transformed without death, and the saints rescued from the hands of death, will meet one another in the presence of their Lord, and friends who have been long separated will be reunited. They all will see and be with their Lord. Surely they have no cause to fear that event which will result in such a deliverance, but, on the contrary, to look forward longingly to it. "For we know," says St Paul, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 22, 23).

To the bad, however, it will be no signal for rejoicing. They shrink from meeting that Lord whom they have despised and persecuted, whom they have rejected and trodden under foot. To them the sight will be

dreadful, of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory, surrounded by hosts of mighty angels and multitudes of glorified saints. That sight will fill them with fear, for they will think He is come to take an awful and immediate vengeance upon them. They will at once be convinced of the truth of those things which they have disbelieved, and will begin in their terror "to say to the mountains, Fall on us : and to the hills, Cover us " (Luke xxiii. 30).

His coming will be known to all. All, whether righteous or wicked, will see Him at once. He will come, we are told, as the lightning that shines from east to west, and is visible to all. When He really comes there will not be any doubt about it, for "*every eye shall see Him.*" "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not. . . . If they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert ; go not forth : behold, He is in the secret chamber ; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be " (Matt. xxiv. 23,

26, 27). "Behold, He cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Rev. i. 7).

Then to the saints there will be given crowns of glory. Each one that has fought in the Lord's strength the fight of the faith perseveringly and successfully, each that has been in the pilgrimage of the Christian life faithful unto the end, will receive then the crown of great reward. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It will be a crown of eternal glory, never fading, never tarnishing, always bright and beautiful, growing more bright and more beautiful as age after age passes away throughout the long eternity. That we may not lose this crown we are exhorted to prepare for eternity, so as to be ready to meet our God whenever He may come.

Satan, the great adversary, is well aware of the shortness of the time. He remembers, we may be sure, all that has been prophecied concerning it, and he carefully observes all the signs of the times. Just as, when our Lord

was on earth, His adversaries understood and remembered His sayings which referred to His rising again the third day, and at His burial took precautions against the possibility of their fulfilment, whilst His own disciples failed to understand them at the time, and did not remember them afterwards; so does Satan understand and remember the prophecies relating to the second coming of the Lord, and sees that they are now near their fulfilment, whilst Christian people are prone to overlook and forget them, and are even sometimes in danger of falling asleep at their posts, and saying in their hearts, "The Lord delayeth His coming." Whilst we are drowsy and slow of perception, Satan is sharp and wide-awake enough. He knows that the Lord is coming very quickly, and that his time is short, and therefore he is doubly, trebly active. In Rev. xii. 12, we are told this: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." And at the present day he does seem to be putting forth all his strength against the Christian Church. We can easily see, and we



cannot but feel, that he is very hard at work amongst us all, individually and socially. He is making use of all kinds of temptations, all kinds of baits, to draw us away from our fidelity to the heavenly Master, to deprive us of our Christianity now, and so our crown hereafter. Our only hope is to trust more implicitly, to cling more firmly, to Him who is stronger than the strong one, wiser than the subtle one; and to pray more earnestly and continually that He will help and preserve us, and, avoiding even the mere appearance of evil, to live holy and pure lives, and strive to have nothing to do with Satan, so as, by God's grace, to yield to him in nothing.

It is evident that as Satan is so active, and so anxious to make the most of the short time that remains to him, Christian people should also be especially active and watchful. They must be earnest and *decided*, not in any way lukewarm, or halting between God and mammon. They must fight *hard* against those foes that assail themselves individually. They must contend against their weaknesses and passions, suppress their evil tempers and desires, resist their inclinations to wander away from

Christ into the winding paths of sin and danger, thrust out of their minds those evil thoughts which will otherwise exclude thoughts of Christ and heaven, which are beneficial to their immortal souls. They must resist and overcome the innumerable temptations of Satan, overthrow the barriers he places in their way, and beat back his fierce assaults. They must also work in the cause of Christ. They must do all that lies in their power to spread abroad His glorious Gospel, to win over those who are alienated from Him, those who are rejecting Him. They must, according to their opportunity and ability, according as God puts it into their power, help and strengthen one another. Christian people all more or less need the help and encouragement of their brethren in Christ. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. xxvii. 17). It is the duty of those who live, or are thrown together, to do all they can to cheer one another as they pass along the road through life, beset with so many troubles and difficulties, to build one another up in their most holy faith, and to help them on towards home.

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What is it that the Christian must hold fast in order to secure his crown? He has in possession a great and precious treasure, and that treasure is "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). This faith he has received into his heart and soul. It brought to him life and happiness, and it is the great motive principle of his actions. He has within a real and abiding hope—a hope that maketh not ashamed ; a hope that he is confident will be realized ; a blessed hope of everlasting life, and of seeing and dwelling with Jesus. He is also possessed of love—love to God and man. He loves God because He first loved him. He has been enabled by the inworking of the Spirit to see and know what great things God has done, and is doing, for Him. How greatly he is indebted to Him, owing Him *all* that he has. He feels how great is His goodness in creation, preservation, and especially redemption. This awakes within him love in return to God, and that must be accompanied by love to his fellow man. He loves as brothers and sisters all the members of the Christian Church. But his love is not limited to these ; he loves and desires the welfare of all the world. He

loves all those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ—and that is the whole of the human race, and he tries to promote, as far as in him lies, their bodily and spiritual good.

This treasure of "*the faith*," which includes hope and love, the Christian must cling to as he desires life and happiness. He must cling to it as a drowning man will cling to a rope thrown to him from the shore for the purpose of drawing him in to safety. Nay, he has been placed in safety, he has been drawn in, and established upon the rock—he must cling by faith to Jesus. As a child walking upon a dangerous and slippery path, overhanging a dreadful precipice, beneath which the briny sea foams and roars, as it dashes against the rocks, and rushes into the dark, dank caverns formed by its own continual motion to and fro, will cling tenaciously to the strong arm of the parent that supports him, so must the humble, faithful Christian cling to Jesus. The parent himself will hold the child firmly and safely, and yet the child will cling to the parent as if its life depended upon itself. So though we believe and know—and how un-

speakably comforting is that assurance—that we are safely upheld by Christ, and that He will *never* let us go, yet realizing, as all true Christians must, the awful consequences of giving up the faith and falling away from Christ, we must exert all our powers in clinging closely to our great Preserver, and holding fast that blessed faith which we have in Him, that, by God's grace, we may be *quite sure* of our crown.

Especially should this be the case when we realize the intense activity of Satan, and the nearness of the Lord's advent. Though many a mighty and subtle foe would snatch from us our crown of reward, and heavenly heritage, if they could, this crown is assured to us by the unfailing word of God, if we hold fast our confidence firm unto the end. Then, when the end comes, whether it be in the form of death, or of the Lord's personal approach, we need have no fear at all—the crown, the happiness, the unending glory are certainly ours.

Dear Christian reader, the voice of Jesus comes to you herein, with a word of solemn warning and exhortation, "Behold, I come

quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Ponder in your own mind the high, the inestimable value of that precious treasure, which has been in the loving mercy of God given to you. Realize its nature. Think at how high a price the Lord Jesus Christ purchased it for you. Remember that Satan and his host of mighty ones are ever trying to wrest it from you, and that now he is more earnest, more active than ever in the great and foul enterprise of ruining souls, and of snatching from them that life, that faith, that hope, that grace, which the Lord's great goodness has so freely and mercifully given them. You who have it, hold it fast, think of it, prize it, keep it in the secret chambers of your heart, that it may grow and spread abroad until it fill your whole soul, lifting it up from earth to heaven, and placing it even while you are here with Jesus.

To this end *continually watch and PRAY*. Watch your heart, watch your actions, watch your words. How sadly cold in matters of religion do our hearts often become! Little disappointments and vexations, and the cold-

ness and hardness of others, seem to freeze them up, and to send Christ and all love and faith out of them, so that our religion seems to be fast evaporating. These are very critical times, and against such states of mind we must earnestly battle. Christ has not deserted us, though we may perhaps be tempted to think that He has, and we must fly to the mercy seat, where we are always welcome, and there remain until our hearts are warmed once more, and we feel the presence of the Spirit of the loving Jesus within us again. We must carefully check by *earnest prayer* the *first* wanderings from Christ, so shall we be safe, so shall we hold fast and increase that precious deposit which we have.

Our actions are ever prone—oh, how prone!—to be such as are inconsistent with our Christian profession. Surrounded, as we are continually, by subtle tempters, who suit so exactly the temptation to the temperament, how difficult is it always to walk uprightly, always to walk circumspectly, as becometh the Christian! Here, too, we must watch—watch our every action, and *pray earnestly*

that the Lord will be with us through the whole of each day. Each day as it comes we should commit into the hands of the Lord, that He may strengthen and guide us through it: each day as it goes should give us more insight into our own character, more knowledge of our own weaknesses, a greater sense of the Lord's ever-present help; and then in future we must be careful to avoid those paths which, by the past, we have been taught are full of temptation to us.

And, then, as to our words. The tongue—that little member, so full of iniquity, so loud in its boastings, and withal so very unruly with many of us—must be bridled. With a firm, determined hand, like a restive steed, it must be held in. How much harm is done by thoughtless words, by not exercising over the tongue that control which the Christian ought, who can tell? Oh! watch that unruly evil, which is so full of deadly poison, and which Satan employs so effectually in impairing the usefulness of the Christian, and bringing reproach upon his holy religion. Let the cry of your heart be ever going up in earnest supplication: “Set a watch, O Lord, before



my mouth ; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. xli. 3).

Keep ever in view the coming of the Lord, and the crown of glory He will bring. Beat that day amongst the wise, not the foolish, virgins. Have your lamps burning brightly, and have continually a good supply of oil to replenish them if they begin to get dim, through the apparent tarrying of the Bridegroom. Be ever ready to go forth and meet Him, for He may come, so far as we know, *very soon*, or perhaps not for many a long day. Oh ! then, be ready to take the crown, whenever it is offered you. Be not found by your Lord sleeping at your post, or wandering in evil and foolish paths, so as to meet Him with shame and not with joy ; but be found working, living for Him, be found watching whether the Lord come soon or late. "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark xiii. 35-37). LOSE

**NOT YOUR CROWN FOR WANT OF WATCHFULNESS.**

Make diligent use continually of all the means of grace which God has mercifully given you. Amongst these we may mention (1) the Sabbath day, which has been hallowed and set apart to be peculiarly the Lord's day, and from the very creation we have been commanded by God to keep one day in seven holy to Him ; and therefore we must be careful not to despise or abuse it, making it a day of idleness or frivolous amusement ; but, as it is meant to be, a time of bodily rest and spiritual refreshment. We should spend it in reading, prayer, and meditation. Then (2) the Christian assembly must not be forsaken, regular and constant attendance upon which brings down upon the soul special great and important blessings. And (3) the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, the sacred supper of the Lord, must be valued, must be partaken of reverently and often, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ spiritually partaken of, as our bodies are by bread and wine. Be *regular* in private

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prayer, and reading of the Word ; be *regular* in public prayer and ordinances. Be reverent and devout. Remember that in spirit Jesus is with you. He observes your conduct in His house of prayer. He observes your conduct on His holy day. He observes your conduct also through the week. Walk continually as before Him, the Searcher of hearts, the One who spieth out all our ways.

And to those unhappy ones who have not anything spiritual to lose, who do not feel themselves entitled to the crown of glory,—if these pages should meet the eye of any such, let me say with all earnestness, Come *this day* to Jesus, and get true repentance and faith. Set yourself this day to find Him out, who is never sought in vain. All who seek shall surely find Him. Therefore seek Him *now*, get what He so freely offers, and, by His grace, hold it fast.; and then hereafter you will wear the crown, and enter into the joy of the Lord.

And to all those who hold fast the faith firm unto the end, by continual watchfulness and prayer, by that grace which the Lord gives abundantly to all His true and faithful

people, will the day of death be faced with peacefulness and hope, will the returning Lord be met with unspeakable joy and songs of praise. And as the end draws near, in whichever form it come, they will be able to join in the exultant cry of the great and noble St Paul: "I have striven the good strife, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall award me at that day: and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

"Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

"Refresh us, Lord, to hold it fast ;  
And when Thy veil is drawn at last,

---

Let us depart where shadows cease  
With words of blessing and of peace."

KEBLE.

*"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace  
in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the  
power of the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xv. 13.*

THE END.

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